

THE THOUGHTFUL PROCLAIMER:  
USING AN INDUCTIVE DUAL AUTHORIAL INTENT HERMENEUTIC  
TO OFFER PREACHERS IN NIGERIA A WAY  
TO PREPARE EXPOSITORY SERMONS

A THESIS-PROJECT  
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Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved,  
a worker who has no need to be ashamed,  
rightly handling the word of truth.

—2 Timothy 2:15

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## ABSTRACT

The health of the church of Nigeria is vital to Christianity in Africa and beyond. Training pastors to preach biblical sermons is key to its continued growth and wellbeing. This Thesis-Project tests a method of training preachers to prepare expository sermons based on a dual authorial intent hermeneutic by using inductive Bible exegesis. This method is taught in a one-week intensive seminar format. The training is based on the book *Thoughtful Proclaimer: A Bottom-Up Guide to Preparing Bible Messages that Transform You from the Inside Out* by Elizabeth Anderson.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### A PROBLEM OBSERVED: LACK OF EXEGETICAL TRAINING

#### CAUSES THEOLOGICAL ERROR DAMAGING THE CHURCH OF NIGERIA

As many of you are aware, about one in four Christians in the world lives in sub-Saharan Africa<sup>1</sup> . . . This sounds like such good news until you start working with the Christians here in Nigeria. It seems there is a mega-church on almost every corner here in Abuja. Almost every billboard in town is for a Christian church or event. Christian music is played everywhere, even in public places and stores. People are from Christian families going back generations. But when you look past the surface you see a great problem. This is not always biblical Christianity as those of you receiving this letter know it.

—Elizabeth Anderson

Preachers are called by God to shepherd their flocks. This is a huge responsibility.

Traditionally, Nigeria's godly Christians have placed a strong emphasis on personal and family Scripture reading and church attendance.<sup>2</sup> Many theologically untrained pastors have done a laudable job of preparing themselves for ministry. Yet, a lack of theological training in the importance of biblical and historical context in exegesis has left many other preachers and their congregations vulnerable to incomplete, syncretistic, and false doctrine.<sup>3</sup> Some preachers have followed the lead of other well-known and financially successful preachers who eschew theological training or instruction in biblical interpretation and exegesis. Poor exegesis has at

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1. Conrad Hackett, Brian Grimm, Vegard Skirbekk, Marcin Stonawski, and Ann Goujon, "Global Christianity: A Report on the Size and Distribution of the World's Christian Population," (2011), accessed February 26, 2021, <https://www.pewforum.org/2011/12/19/global-christianity-regions/>.

2. To the credit of missionaries and the influence of the British Scripture Union, Christians in Nigeria tend to be Bible readers. See Gary S. Maxey and Peter Ozodo, *The Seduction of the Nigerian Church* (Ipaga, Lagos, Nigeria: West Africa Theological Seminary, WATS Publications, 2017), Locationn 8495.

3. Maxey, *The Seduction of the Nigerian Church*, Location 8495.

times proved to be quite lucrative for captivating pastors who, unburdened by this kind of solid biblical hermeneutic, are none the less skilled at oration and leadership, thus misguiding the sheep of God's pastures.

The problem observed in Nigeria, is that so-called "Spirit-led" preaching based on a personal response to topical Scripture passages with very limited biblical foundation has led to the spread of unbiblical theology which is outpacing evangelical Christianity in Nigeria. As Conrad Mbewe, chancellor of African Christian University and pastor in Zambia for nearly three decades, adds, specifically about Nigeria, "You cannot grow true spirituality where the cross of Christ and the Christ of the cross is absent."<sup>4</sup> Mbewe's comment further points out the results of misappropriating the biblical meaning of the atonement for the Christian. This chapter examines the problem of Christianity's changing theological focus in Nigeria and begins to look at one option for a solution by training Nigerian preachers to do inductive biblical exegesis in a canonical context in order to prepare expository messages which could return the Christian church to the cross and the Word.<sup>5</sup>

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4. Conrad Mbewe has a PhD in missions from the University of Pretoria. Conrad Mbewe, "Nigerian Religious Junk," *A Letter from Kbwata*, 2011, <http://www.conradmbewe.com/2011/02/nigerian-religious-junk.html>.

5. There are many different views on what expository preaching is. As we will see in the coming chapters, the view of expository preaching that I propose for teaching preachers in Nigeria is an ambassadorial proclamation of God's reconciling intent for the world as portrayed in the original inspired author's intent as observed in a passage's rhetorical, historical, and canonical setting. This is my take on Haddon Robinson's view that expository preaching is, "the communication of a biblical concept, derived from and transmitted through a historical, grammatical, and literary study of a passage in its context, which the Holy Spirit first applies to the personality and experience of the preacher, then through the preacher, applies to the hearers." Haddon W. Robinson, *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014), Location 228.

When this thesis uses the word "lay preachers," it is not to indicate non-professional or part-time preachers or pastors but to indicate those pastors and preachers that do not have outside formal theological training in biblical exegesis.

## Thesis

This Thesis-Project proposes a method to teach Nigerian preachers how to prepare biblical expository sermons based on God's intent in order to counteract unbiblical theology.<sup>6</sup> I propose an inductive, question and answer-based, method that focuses Bible study both on the original biblical author's and God's universal (canonical) purposes for a significant length passage (a passage long enough to convey one of the author's main ideas). I propose that this can improve a preacher's ability to preach biblical, contextual, redemptive, theologically accurate sermons in places like Nigeria.<sup>7</sup> Preachers in Nigeria can do this basic exegesis for preaching by concentrating their initial sermon preparation on reading whole books, focusing meditatively on large passages, and learning to ask and answer key theological and contextual questions, all under the power of the Holy Spirit.<sup>8</sup>

I believe it is possible to provide preachers a basic introduction to biblical exegesis for sermon preparation in as little as one week by showing them how to use an inductive exegesis

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6. I call the divine intent for a passage (or dual a(A)uthorial intent) the Commander's Intent in the Thoughtful Proclaimer method.

7. An author's main idea will almost never be covered in less than a paragraph (except in Proverbs) but will usually require several paragraphs or a chapter. For narrative, the main idea may cover more than one chapter. For a Psalm they will require the complete Psalm.

8. A key passage of scripture for this thesis and my theology of preaching is John 14-16. "If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you. 'I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.'" (John 14:15-18, ESV) "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you." (John 14:26) See also, 1 Cor. 2:10; 1 John 2:20, 27. Scripture must be studied under the power of the Holy Spirit to be properly understood and applied. The Holy Spirit is the context of Scripture.

Note, all scripture quotations in this thesis are taken from the ESV translation unless otherwise noted.

method focused on dual a(A)uthorial intent).<sup>9</sup> Dual a(A)uthorial intent is simply a term I have coined that represents the view that since biblical authors were inspired by the Holy Spirit to write scriptures, the original author's intent is inspired. A dual a(A)uthorial intent refers to both the earthly author's purpose for writing and the canonical intent, that is the Holy Spirit's universal purpose for a passage in its place as part of the whole corpus of the Christian Bible.<sup>10</sup> The "dual a(A)uthorial intent" for my purposes here then is the preachable, universal purpose for a passage. I call it the "Commander's Intent," in my book and the training materials used in Nigeria for that reason.<sup>11</sup>

The method I used to teach preaching is called the "Thoughtful Proclaimer Method."<sup>12</sup> It was written to walk Bible teachers and preachers step by step through a thorough message preparation process.<sup>13</sup> To amplify, my thesis is that preachers can learn to discern and preach God's universal and redemptive purposes for Bible passages by first understanding the original author's Spirit-inspired intents for what they wrote. This can be accomplished by showing them how to ask and answer contextual and theological questions. The results of this contextual exegesis will be to discern the dual a(A)uthorial intent or "Commander's Intent." The Commander's Intent can reputedly be used to develop a "Purpose for Preaching." An expository

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9. The lay preachers were taught these methods in a series of 4 seven-hour seminars followed by opportunities to preach and be critiqued.

10. Particularly for Old Testament passages, the dual a(A)uthorial intent is related but may not be the same as the original author's intent, as far as that author was aware. The dual a(A)uthorial intent is never less universal and Christian than the author's original intent.

11. Elizabeth Anderson, *Thoughtful Proclaimer: A Bottom-Up Guide to Preparing Bible Messages that Transform You from the Inside Out* (Bloomington, IN: Westbow Press, 2017).

12. My hope is that this will launch them on a study of the Word of God in context for their lifetime.

13. For details on the method, it's development, purposes, and how it was taught see Chapter 6.

sermon focused towards that redemptive “Purpose for Preaching” can correct unbiblical preaching in Nigeria.

Inductive exegesis, as taught in the Thoughtful Proclaimer method, includes two main parts. First, a preacher reads a significant length passage in its full book-length context and then continues to read it several times to hear the message of the author. During this stage, the preacher asks his own and his congregation’s assumed questions, and answers them, when possible, in the next phase. This next phase then guides the preacher to ask and answer historical, cultural, grammatical, literary, and canonical questions (along with the unanswered questions from phase 1, as possible). The questions are meant to primarily be answered from the Bible itself. The goal of all of these questions is to understand the original author and God’s purposes for the passage in order to preach them.

“Dual a(A)uthorial intent” or “Commander’s Intent” refers to God’s purpose for a passage as understood by studying the original intents of a passage’s inspired author in a canonical context. The original inspired author’s intents are determined, to the extent they can be, from the passage’s complete context. The divine Author’s intents are understood by considering the place and purpose of this passage and the inspired earthly authors intent’s place in God’s larger story of redemption found throughout the Bible. A thorough understanding of these intents and purposes can build a solid bridge for preachers to travel on as they move from a passage’s purpose to sermonic purpose (Purpose for Preaching.)

The Thoughtful Proclaimer method walks a preacher through the process of turning the passage’s sermonic purpose into a redemptive sermon. The Thoughtful Proclaimer Bible exegesis and expository message method, if adapted, does not ensure a change in the

trajectory of Nigerian Christianity, but it may be a step in that direction for those who avail themselves of it.

The rest of this first chapter will focus, as promised, on the problems a lack of contextual exegesis has caused in Nigeria. Chapter Two will look at the theological reasons, namely the doctrine of inspiration, for using a dual a(A)uthorial intent for preaching preparation. Chapter Three will consider a theology of preaching based in the preacher as God's ambassadors of reconciliation and redemption. Chapter Four will dig deeper into the theology of reconciliation as it pertains to the atonement, showing how the problems of syncretism and the prosperity gospel grow out of a view of the atonement that is not built on the fullest teachings of the biblical Canon on the subject. In Chapter Five I will note some of the relevant literature regarding the demise of authorial intent for preaching and how this can be corrected specifically in Nigeria. Chapter Six contains the Project overview, specifically how the method was developed and how exegesis for preaching was taught. And finally, in Chapter Seven I will review the results as reported by the preachers themselves regarding the method and the benefit of the Thesis method, as well and plans for the future.

Nigeria is tribally diverse, yet I maintain that it is not so much that diversity, but rather a lack of biblical exegesis that can be blamed for the problems we will consider below, namely syncretistic spiritual beliefs, the popularization of the prosperity gospel and its ostentatious leadership, and rampant corruption both in and out of the church.<sup>14</sup> To counteract these trends,

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14. Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa and is the largest primarily black nation in the world. Nigeria's population is largely dominated by three ethnic groups—Yoruba, Hausa-Fulani and Igbo. The Yoruba are in the West, the Hausa-Fulani in the North and Igbo in the East. There are also hundreds of other ethnic groups of wide-ranging population sizes such as the Urhobo, Itsekiri, Bini, Ishan, Isoko, Ijaw, Ukwuani, Idoma, Igala, Igbira, Kanuri, Ibibio, Efic, Ogoni, Oron, etc.. Nigerian National Bureau of Statistics, *Nigeria Poverty Profile 2010* (2010).

preachers must learn and adopt sound hermeneutical and homiletical practices in order to preach the Bible truthfully to the many believers in Nigeria.<sup>15</sup> As we will see, the consequences in a country of 209 million people where 50 percent of the population are Christians while 90 percent of their pastors have very little theological or exegetical training have been dire.<sup>16</sup>

### **Unbiblical Preaching Leads Biblically Illiterate Christians Astray**

Christians around the globe have at times been led astray and deceived by incomplete or false biblical preaching whether from seminary-trained preachers or untrained preachers. Nigerian preachers are often not trained in biblical exegesis and theology. This is not unusual, in fact, the overwhelming majority, 85 percent, of churches in the world are led by pastors without formal theological training.<sup>17</sup> But, according to Conrad Mbewe, the problem is

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Conrad Mbewe, *God's Design for the Church: A Guide for African Pastors and Ministry Leaders* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2020), 2548.

15. "There are more Christians in Nigeria than in any single nation in traditionally Christian Western Europe. In fact, Nigeria's Christian population is nearly the same size as the total population of Germany." Hackett et al., "Global Christianity: A Report on the Size and Distribution of the World's Christian Population," 35.

16. Mbewe, *God's Design for the Church*, Location 2550. Hackett et al., "Global Christianity: A Report on the Size and Distribution of the World's Christian Population," 11.

E. Kingsley Larbi makes it clear in Chapter 2 of *Global Renewal Christianity: Spirit-Empowered Movements: Past, Present and Future* that, "Nigeria may be regarded as the heartland of African Pentecostalism in that it appears all the ministers with global stature and leading ministries have originated there. The key among them, besides Benson Idahosa . . . include E. A. Adeboye, William Kumuyi, T. B. Joshua, Chris Oyakhilome, and D. O. Oyedepo. Some of the world's biggest Pentecostal churches were founded by Nigerians, including Sunday Adelaja's Embassy of God in Kiev, Ukraine, and Matthew Ashimolowo's Kingsway International Christian Centre in the United Kingdom." E. Kingsley Larbi, "The New Face of African Christianity: David Oyedepo's Winners Chapel and the Pentecostal Message of Salvation," *Global Renewal Christianity: Spirit-Empowered Movements Past, Present, and Future*, vol. 3: Africa, ed. Vinson; Yong Synan, Amos; Asamoah-Gyadu, J. Kwabena (Charisma House, 2016), 395, note 7.

17. "Training Leaders International," accessed January 3, 2021, <https://trainingleadersinternational.org/>.

especially acute in Africa due to the rapid numeric growth of Christianity: “On one hand, [we] celebrate . . . how widely Christianity has spread across Africa. On the other hand, [we] bemoan . . . the lack of spiritual depth in the African church. The two stand in stark contrast. In terms of numbers, we are seeing steady growth. In terms of maturity, however, we still lack the depth.”<sup>18</sup> Unfortunately, according to Mbewe, the problems in the rest of Africa are closely related to the theological decline of Nigerian Christianity:

Nation after nation [in Africa reports] on the arrival of “Nigerian religious junk” that [has changed] the landscape of what there once was of evangelicalism [in the rest of Africa] . . . Evidently, this junk originated from mega-churches in the USA and then found ready soil in West Africa, and especially in Nigeria. Having given it an African flavour, it is now being exported across Africa at a phenomenal rate.<sup>19</sup>

It is true that as a westerner and outsider, I am unable to appreciate the way indigenous beliefs are appropriately part of the Nigerian church and how they might affect hermeneutics. Notwithstanding the impact of colonialism, various missionary enterprises, and the Nigerian Revival of 1930; indigenous Christianity in northern Africa is as old as the New Testament.<sup>20</sup> Thus, any hermeneutic for Bible interpretation offered in a Nigerian context should undoubtedly fit in an authentic African milieu. But, as we will consider in a moment, it is equally true that syncretism with ancestor worship, corruption, persistent pagan cultural traditions, superstitions such as fears of Christian children being witches, a lucrative over-focus in the church on the world of spirits (ancestral spirits, Satan, demons, and angels), the burgeoning

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18. Mbewe, *God's Design for the Church*, Location 2953.

19. Mbewe, “Nigerian Religious Junk.” Mbewe is reporting here from a consultative meeting in South Africa which surveyed the spiritual state of evangelical churches in the southern Africa sub-region.

20. Lamin Sanneh, *Whose Religion Is Christianity? The Gospel Beyond the West* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003), Location 523-34.

growth of prosperity gospel style churches, a prominent lack of servant leadership, and a loss of emphasis on holiness are growing problems in the Nigerian church.<sup>21</sup>

Bad theology, preached by insufficiently theologically trained pastors, seems to be attractive and is spreading rapidly. Nigerian pastors, sometimes pastors of some of the world's largest churches, though they are often highly educated in other subjects, have often eschewed the sorts of theological training which would allow them to critically evaluate popular theologies according to canonical contextual biblical exegesis.<sup>22</sup> Though they are articulate, charismatic, and entrepreneurial, their lack of in-depth exegetical training becomes increasingly evident as their churches grow.<sup>23</sup> It follows that Nigerian Christians who sit under their ministries, in other words the pastors of the next generation, will emulate them, seeking out ministry training in schools led by these same preachers whose unbiblical views of Christ's atonement and non-contextual readings of Scripture have caused the problems in the first place. Though this occurs in many churches in the world, in Nigerian churches with such huge

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21. Mbewe, *God's Design for the Church*, Location 3086. Mbewe was speaking here for all of Africa, not specifically Nigeria.

22. Sunday Jide Komolafe, *The Transformation of African Christianity: Development and Change in the Nigerian Church* (Carlisle, Cumbria, UK: Langham Monographs, 2013), 382.

For example, Enoch A. Adeboye a front-line proponent of the prosperity "gospel" and one of the most popular pastors in Nigeria, was formerly a math professor. He has headed the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG), a denomination which has grown phenomenally under his stewardship. It is hard to know the true extent of Pastor Adeboye's wealth and what belongs to the church, but the BBC reported his personal net worth to be between 60 and 130 million pounds. The Redeemed Christian Church of God, which was not well known before Adeboye's time, now claims branches in over 100 countries, including over 14,000 branches in Nigeria. Nduka Orjinmo, "Enoch Adeboye Sexism Row: Why the Nigerian Pastor is So Popular," *BBC News* (Abuja) August 12, 2020, accessed December 30, 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-53488921#:~:text=The%2078%2Dyear%2Dold%20ranks,stewardship%20it%20has%20grown%20phenomenally>. Ifeoluwa Orisakahunsi, "Biography of Pastor Enoch Adejare Adeboye," 2020, accessed Oct. 9, 2021, <https://gospelfilmsng.com/biography-of-pastor-enoch-adejare-adeboye>.

23. Komolafe, *The Transformation of African Christianity*, 382.

numbers, so much money, and media prowess, misapplication of Scripture spreads—not only to the rest of Nigeria, but to all Africa, and now is being reimported to the United States and other parts of the world.<sup>24</sup>

Christian leaders of Nigeria have been taking note of these theological problems for decades. As far back as 1996, the Concerned Minister's Forum highlighted three glaring problems:

First is the pseudo-Christian and sometimes outright occult roots of many Christian teachings and practices in the church. Second is the unscriptural ostentation that surrounds Christian leaders, especially as manifested by the new craze for the office of bishop in today's church. The third area is the wrong and unbalanced emphasis on material prosperity that overshadows the church throughout the entire nation.<sup>25</sup>

If the next generation of the growing Nigerian church is to develop in maturity and sound doctrine, they must be taught the Christian Scriptures in their churches now, especially from the pulpit. Solid exegetical training for preachers is a must if they are to learn to preach the Bible accurately. Only then can the huge number of Nigerian believers begin to discern error in what they hear around them. Only then will these spiritual issues be exposed as unbiblical, and their results begin to be corrected.<sup>26</sup> Then they can teach their congregants how to read and study the scriptures inductively and canonically for themselves.

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24. Komolafe, *The Transformation of African Christianity*, 382-83.

25. According to Gary Maxey, the Concerned Ministers' Forum was launched in Abuja in November 1996. It was first begun to consult on the state of the church in Nigeria, a decision was made to launch a multifaceted effort to stem the tide of decline within the church. See Maxey, *The Seduction of the Nigerian Church*, Location 8047. A second edition of their paper was published by Calvary Ministries in Garki, Abuja, Nigeria: A. Okoh, A.I.A.N. Nwabekee, A.U. Nwosu, M. Abaya, J.M. Ali, and Peter Ozodo, *Earnestly Contending for the Faith: Rekindling the Agenda for Responsible Christian Leadership* (CAPRO Media, 1995).

26. See Chapter Four to read more about the unbiblical theology that undergirds prosperity preaching.

## Religious Syncretism Twists Biblical Truth

Traditional African religions conceive of a world with a remote and inaccessible but usually benevolent supreme being at the top; angels, demons, lower gods, and ancestors somewhere in the middle; and humans and the visible world at the bottom.<sup>27</sup> Traditional African religions are therefore concerned with manipulating or appeasing the unpredictable ancestral spirits and angelic and demonic spirits so that they can experience the care and benevolence of god.<sup>28</sup> Appeasing the spirit realm involves sacrifices, libations, and the guidance of shamans (priests) or witch doctors.<sup>29</sup> People do not ask “what” made me sick, but “who.”<sup>30</sup>

Maxey observes that initially, Pentecostal theology helped Nigerians to blend their culture and Christianity,

Though it was a gradual process, the introduction of Pentecostal theology into Nigeria to a large degree lessened the long-standing tendency toward Nigeria’s awkward syncretism. For well over 100 years that syncretism has left many Nigerian Christians caught in the middle between their Bible-focused Christian faith and their desire to find satisfying answers to their power struggles with the invisible spirit world. Jesus truly has all power or authority in heaven and on earth (Matthew 28:18), and that includes “authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy” (Luke 10:18). In short, we do not hesitate to say that Pentecostalism has boldly addressed some of the greatest felt needs of the African heart and mind.<sup>31</sup>

Clearly, Christianity asserts belief in a spirit realm *and* explains how to understand it inside of a biblical framework; unfortunately, religious syncretism and perhaps a rebellion

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27. Maxey, *The Seduction of the Nigerian Church*, Location 16238.

28. Maxey, *The Seduction of the Nigerian Church*, Location 16239-682.

29. Maxey, *The Seduction of the Nigerian Church*, Location 16239-682.

30. Maxey, *The Seduction of the Nigerian Church*, Location 16239-682.

31. Maxey, *The Seduction of the Nigerian Church*, Location 16683.

against western missionaries, has brought about the growth of purely African and Nigerian denominations, such as Aladura, whose indigenous interpretation of Scripture, though incarnational, has admitted to leaning overly far towards spiritual focus on the battle with evil, exorcising demons and interpreting dreams and visions.<sup>32</sup>

But whichever Christian denominations one might consider in Nigeria, it must be admitted that any truly biblical worldview includes the power of the Holy Spirit, angels, and Satan. But in the minds of some, the Nigerian pastor has, in a sense, supplanted what we in the west think of as the village witch doctor. For example, many church pastors offer “deliverance” services. Conrad Mbewe explains,

Why have deliverance sessions become such a common phenomenon in the churches in Africa? The answer is not difficult to find. It is because church pastors have fast become the equivalent of witchdoctors in the popular African mind. Even Christians come to church not so much thinking in terms of what they should render to God as their divine Benefactor but rather thinking in terms of what they can get from God through his servant [the preacher], and especially through his powerful intercessions and interventions.<sup>33</sup>

As a result, in Nigeria, shamanism and the occult often go hand in hand with the darker side of the “prosperity gospel” due to the lack of or a laxity in exegetically grounded expository Bible preaching.<sup>34</sup>

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32. Komolafe, *The Transformation of African Christianity*, 129-30.

33. Mbewe, *God's Design for the Church*, Location 1946.

34. The further one digs into the syncretism of Christian leadership and the occult, the worse it gets. Belief that Christian children may be witches is closely linked to Christianity's prosperity gospel in Nigeria. The neo-Pentecostal movement's focus on witchcraft and demon possession in turn means some pastors and “prophets” make extra income through counseling and exorcism. This also sets up a need for Christian orphanages, supported by donations from other countries. This is necessary because the “witch children's” parents throw them out into the streets to live. This casting out of demons and children results in a financial win-win situation for the pastor/prophets and the orphanages who take in the uncared for street children who are not orphans at all. Utibe Effiong, “What's Behind Children Being Cast as Witches in Nigeria,” *The Conversation* (April 14, 2016 2016), accessed February 24, 2021, <https://theconversation.com/whats-behind-children-being-cast-as-witches-in-nigeria->

Combining the spirit world and the unbiblical parts of theology behind the prosperity gospel, which we discuss below and in depth in Chapter Four, has resulted in syncretistic beliefs regarding tithing. Donations to particular ministries have replaced the sacrifices and libations of African traditional religion. Giving is thought to bring liberation from the oppression of poverty and illness.<sup>35</sup> Scriptures such as Malachi 3:8-10, Luke 6:38, 2 Corinthians 9:6-11 and verses on sowing and reaping and on tithing are used to support the view that giving to the church will ensure that a person will not get sick and will be miraculously prospered.<sup>36</sup> Popular preachers promote this view, often to their own aggrandizement. “The delusion created by these preachers in the minds of the believers possibly explains the unconditional financial support of some [independent charismatic] and neo-pentecostal ministries which promote these views.

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57021. See also Uwem Essia, “The Social Economy of Child Witch Labeling in Nigeria: The Case of Akwa Ibom State,” *Science Journal of Psychology* 2012 (2012), <https://www.sjpub.org/sjpsych/sjpsych-289.pdf>. Uwem Essia did this research for the Department of Economics University of Calabar, Calabar, Nigeria.

35. David Ononogbu, Emmanuel Chiwetalu Ossai, George Christian Nchte, and Christopher N. Ibenwa, “Poverty and the Poor in the Early Church: A Challenge to Prosperity Preachers in Nigeria,” *Mediterranean Journal of Social Science* 7, no. 5 (2016): 379.

36. Mal 3:8-11 (KJV 1900): Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, Even this whole nation. Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, That there may be meat in mine house, And prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, If I will not open you the windows of heaven, And pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, And he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; Neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the Lord of hosts.

Luke 6:38 (KJV 1900): Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.

2 Cor 9:6-11 (KJV 1900): But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work: (As it is written, He hath dispersed abroad; he hath given to the poor: his righteousness remaineth forever. Now he that ministereth seed to the sower both minister bread for your food, and multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness;) Being enriched in everything to all bountifulness, which causeth through us thanksgiving to God.

This is true, even though there is obviously no appreciable or concrete achievement to the parishioner as a result of their generosity.”<sup>37</sup>

Even so, 96 percent to 97 percent of Nigerian Christians (across all denominations) believe God grants health and wealth to the faithful.<sup>38</sup> Lack of contextual exegesis has led to teaching which holds that a Christian is “by nature, meant to be rich and that poverty is ungodly.”<sup>39</sup> This type of theology gained popularity in Nigeria between the late 1970s and early 1980s in the midst of widespread poverty and perceived governmental incapability and distrust.<sup>40</sup> Religion became an institution where Nigerians search for help and solutions to the

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37. Ononogbu et al., “Poverty and the Poor in the Early Church: A Challenge to Prosperity Preachers in Nigeria.”

38. Luis Lugo, “Spirit and Power – A 10-Country Survey of Pentecostals,” *Pew Research Center* (October 5, 2006): 30, <https://www.pewforum.org/2006/10/05/spirit-and-power/>. The survey conducted by the Pew Forum asked, “Now I am going to read you a series of statements on some different topics. For each one, please tell me if you completely agree with it, mostly agree with it, mostly disagree with it or completely disagree with it. The first one is [insert item]. Do you completely agree, mostly agree, mostly disagree or completely disagree? Item f. “God will grant material prosperity to all believers who have enough faith.” Item g. “God will grant good health and relief from sickness to believers who have enough faith.” Of 650 Nigerian Christians taking the survey the following percentages were reported for Item f/Item g:

Pentecostals who answered yes: 95/97%. Other Christians who answered yes: 93/95%. All Christians who answered yes: 96/97%.

Of all the U.S. and the countries in Latin America, Africa, and Asia surveyed, Nigerians answered yes in much higher numbers.

39. Ononogbu et al., “Poverty and the Poor in the Early Church: A Challenge to Prosperity Preachers in Nigeria.”

40. Maxey blames the United States for the importation of the prosperity gospel to Nigeria, and one soon notices that Nigerians do consume a lot of U.S.-based prosperity gospel media. “It is in that vein that I propose that in the past 100 years two of the most widely impacting trans-denominational religious imports in Nigeria have been the British Scripture Union and the American Prosperity Gospel. The first of these imports came by boat, from the United Kingdom. The second came by air, from the United States. I believe the first was overwhelmingly for the good of the country, but that the second has been a much more disastrous experience.” Gary Maxey, *Capturing a Lost Vision: Can Nigeria’s Greatest Revival Live Again?* (Ipaga, Lagos, Nigeria: West Africa Theological Seminary, WATS Publications, 2016), Locationn 555.

condition of poverty and illness.<sup>41</sup> Clearly, the guarantee of wealth sounds good to many in a country with a 69 percent poverty rate.<sup>42</sup>

### The Prosperity Gospel Fleeces the Flock in Nigeria

The consequence of preaching Bible passages out of context has been that unscrupulous shepherds have used the Bible's own words to take advantage of already impoverished believers under their watch.<sup>43</sup> Whether sexually or financially, the extreme power imbalance between the lead pastor and everyone else leaves the believers vulnerable. Let me quote again from one of my prayer letters home regarding the final sermons preached in our seminar:

It is said that if you want to get rich in Nigeria, invest in oil or become a pastor. One young man, as he was preaching yesterday in our seminar, was repeating lots of lines he has heard preached in his home church. One of them was, "You have to connect [I assume he meant with Jesus] to collect." Another man misspoke as he was preaching and said [what he has heard so often in his home church], "My theme today is money." Another sweet . . . older man was preaching, and he hadn't understood one of my major points about preaching on large passages and whole chapters, so he preached on 1 Kings 1:1-2 where David is an old man. His point was that you should do everything with all your strength like David did, because you will be old and die soon enough. This preacher's illustration for following your passions was David. "David loved beautiful women so when he was young, he pursued beautiful women with all his heart!"<sup>44</sup>

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41. Efe M. Ehioghae, "Tithing and the Quest for Material Prosperity: A Critical Evaluation of Contemporary Trends in Nigerian Pentecostalism," *Asia-Africa Journal of Mission and Ministry (AAMM)* 6 (2012): 143.

42. In 2010 the Harmonized Nigeria Living Standard Survey was done by the National Bureau of Statistics and found that 69 percent of Nigerians live in poverty. That is 112.47 million people. *Nigeria Poverty Profile 2010*.

43. Those [believers that sprout up] on the rocky ground are the ones who receive the word with joy when they hear it, but they have no root. They believe for a while, but in the time of testing they fall away. The seed that fell among thorns stands for those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by life's worries, riches and pleasures, and they do not mature. See Luke 8:4-15.

44. Elizabeth Anderson, prayer letter from Abuja, Nigeria, March 10, 2019.

As we have mentioned, one of the more glaring concerns that arises due to lack of good exegesis and biblical preaching in Nigeria is the strong focus on “prosperity preaching” or the “Faith theology.”<sup>45</sup> Believers are taught that the accumulation of wealth is a barometer for faith and that leaders who perform spectacular signs and wonders, rather than those who preach the Word, should be followed and never questioned.<sup>46</sup> Though a form of prosperity gospel is prevalent in the United States as well, the Nigerian version goes further than simply saying God wants his followers to be healthy and wealthy or even “name it, claim it.” In Nigeria, the exponents also preach that “poverty and the vicissitudes of life are a form of oppression which manifest from the kingdom of darkness, from which Christians must seek to be delivered, in order to secure relief.”<sup>47</sup>

Not all Christians in Nigeria believe in the prosperity gospel, but even a quick visit to Nigeria makes it clear that many do. According to Sunday Jide Komolafe, “It is difficult to imagine how the faithful have interiorized the materialistic to such an extent that everything connected with church or God has been identified primarily with one thing: irreducible material acquisition.”<sup>48</sup> This is evident by the many flashy church conference billboards and the presence of some of the most profitable churches in the world.<sup>49</sup> At one church in Abuja I observed many

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45. Justification by faith alone was new to many Christians I taught in Abuja in a class on the book of Romans. Also, one of the preachers who took the Thoughtful Proclaimer preaching seminar had a view that you should get close to Jesus so you can be rich.

46. “Training Leaders International,”

47. Ononogbu et al., “Poverty and the Poor in the Early Church: A Challenge to Prosperity Preachers in Nigeria,” 379.

48. Komolafe, *The Transformation of African Christianity*, 383.

49. “The world’s biggest church-related auditoriums are in Nigeria at huge retreat areas set up for camp-style, denomination wide gatherings used throughout the year. For example, under the visionary leadership of

purple banners leading up its long driveway and announcing, “Where the Rich People Go!”<sup>50</sup> An unbiblical view of what God sees as true riches abounds.<sup>51</sup>

## Societal Corruption

If the theological problems of syncretism and the prosperity gospel were not enough, it is clear to some Nigerian Christian leaders and to those who study global Christianity that

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Enoch Adeboye, the Redeemed Christian Church of God’s vast tract of land called Redemption Camp can seat 1,000,000 in its auditorium built of steel and cement.

Just down the Lagos Expressway from Redemption Camp, Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries, founded by Daniel Olukoya, has built Prayer City. It can accommodate over 500,000 worshippers, with an overflow of 250,000. Likewise, Deeper Life Bible Church, which Pastor Williams Kumuyi started in 1973, also has a conference center off the Lagos-Ibadan Expressway. It is nearing completion on a 130,000-capacity main auditorium there.

The Winner Is . . . If we’re talking about the world’s largest church buildings that are specifically used for weekly worship services, Nigeria still leads the way. My online list of global megachurches itemizes 16 different congregations in that country with seating capacities of 10,000 or more.

The largest is Living Faith Church, also known as Winners Chapel, with a 50,000-seat church auditorium called Faith Tabernacle. The 2010 Guinness World Records book recognized it as the largest church auditorium in the world. Predictably, Winners Chapel, led by its founder David Oyedepo, is also one of Nigeria’s highest-attended churches.

Other Nigerian church leaders have announced plans to build even larger sanctuaries. For example, Joshua Iginla, leader of Champions Royal Assembly, has broken ground on what he projects to be an 80,000-seater.” Warren Bird, “Megachurch World: A Church with 50,000 Seat?,” *Outreach Magazine*, no. May 29, 2016 (2016), <http://outreachmagazine.com/ideas/17623-megachurch-world-a-church-with-50000-seats.html>.

50. The Commonwealth of Zion Assembly (COZA), Abuja, Nigeria.

51. The New Testament, particularly, speaks of riches as spiritual wealth rather than earthly money. “To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God, who created all things, so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places . . . For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.” (Ephesians 3:8-11, 14–19) See also such passages as Romans 2:4; 9:19-26; Ephesians 1:18.

insufficient and incorrect biblical preaching has played a part in fomenting the rampant corruption seen in Nigeria as a whole.<sup>52</sup> Gary Maxey comments:

The most overriding evidence of Nigerian social and moral decline has been the flood of corruption that has enveloped virtually every sector of Nigerian life over the past forty years. Nigeria has been turned into an international pariah. The corruption is like a flood with no end in sight. Despite occasional efforts at improvement it is sad that Nigeria as a nation has gradually slid into a cesspool of seemingly unstoppable corruption in every sector of the society.<sup>53</sup>

Unfortunately, it is apparent that the Christian church in Nigeria, despite the fact that they make up close to half of the citizenry, has been powerless to stop the rampant corruption. In fact, the church itself has been witness to the moral decline of its pastors as well.<sup>54</sup> Sadly, churches and Christian ministries themselves are often unethical, especially where money is concerned. This corruption gives Nigerian Christianity a bad name before their Muslim neighbors and it especially confuses new Muslim converts.<sup>55</sup> Due to a lack of biblical truth and holiness, the church cannot lead the nation “in the path of righteousness.”

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52. Corruption is commonplace. I saw an instance of corruption when my hosts received a late-night call that a pastor’s wife had been arrested and was being held overnight in a Nigerian prison for inability to pay her son’s hospital bill. The pastor and his wife’s son had been hospitalized for a long time before he finally died, and the couple was unable to pay the bill, so the wife was arrested and placed in prison. A “fine” paid to the right hands was what was needed to allow the pastor’s wife to go home and sleep in her own bed.

53. Maxey, *The Seduction of the Nigerian Church*, Location 6022. Maxey, *Capturing a Lost Vision: Can Nigeria’s Greatest Revival Live Again?*, Location 2918.

54. Maxey, *The Seduction of the Nigerian Church*, Location 6043.

55. Unfortunately, Muslim converts to Christianity are often either feared and ignored or exploited for publicity. Thus, they are not welcomed into the church family and disciplined. This also causes spiritual confusion for them.

## Congregational Exploitation

Biblical illiteracy within church members, caused by preachers who do not model how to read and understand scripture, has allowed unscrupulous preachers to exploit their congregations. Expository Bible teaching which models reading and interpreting the Bible based on dual a(A)uthorial intent would alert believers to false teaching when they hear it. A growing understanding of the Word in context would empower Christians to choose churches where the Bible was preached according to the author and heavenly Author's purposes instead of preaching that focuses solely on the pastor's whims.

Hand in hand with biblical illiteracy is the growth of "Christian" cult-like churches in Africa which offer more and bigger miracles. According to Mbewe, a new "church" springs up daily and soon draws large crowds from other churches. These are church members who abandon old churches for the newer ones. "The vulnerability of the people is soon exploited by wolves in sheep's clothing. They are financially defrauded and sexually abused. Despite the fact that their leaders are doing what is patently wrong, [their congregations] still give them the honor that should be given only to Jesus Christ."<sup>56</sup> Mbewe notes that these victims are sincere Christians who have not learned to discern truth from error because they live on a perennial diet of sermons devoid of biblical doctrine.<sup>57</sup>

This point is further explained in my letters:

But you can perhaps see what the kingdom of God is up against here. There are many good churches, but they don't attract the numbers of people that the churches who promise you wealth, miracles, and freedom from demons do. It is as if the village witch

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56. Mbewe, *God's Design for the Church*, Location 2912.

57. Mbewe, *God's Design for the Church*, Location 2914.

doctor and the village chief morphed into one person who put on a nice dark suit with a bright pink shirt and started a church and people flock to it.<sup>58</sup>

Mbewe explains the danger of unlimited power that lies in the common chief/pastor psychological association as well:

Although many of us no longer live in villages, the view that a leader—even a church leader—is like a tribal chief still lingers in our psyche. To begin with, a chief is not primarily chosen by the people. It is hereditary. The position comes to him because “the gods” placed him in the right family tree, at the right position in that family, and at the very right time. Once he is inaugurated, it is as if the spirit of the gods comes to dwell with him. A chief, especially a paramount chief, is the highest position in the tribe. He may have many elders and advisors to help him, but his decisions are final. He is the final custodian of the vast land that belongs to the entire tribe. He has an aura about him that fills the people with fear when they are in his presence. He has a special seat, which is his throne. He has many assistants around him . . . When you understand this psyche, you begin to see why pastors and other church leaders in Africa tend to be treated with the dignity that leaves political leaders in the West green with envy. They end up being accountable to no one and easily abuse the money, property, and females in the church—and get away with it.<sup>59</sup>

Rather than servants of God and pastors of the flock preachers see themselves as “founding” pastors with the authority of a chief. Consequently, theologically untrained preachers in Nigeria who establish churches do not consider themselves in need of training in biblical exegesis or canonical theology. Their personal lack of biblical understanding and grounding, the kind of biblical grounding that can come from a sound hermeneutic for preparing biblical sermons year after year, leaves preachers who plant new churches assuming they have absolute rights like a chief. This is based on their cultural understanding of a founder

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58. Anderson, prayer letter from Abuja, Nigeria. March 11, 2019.

59. Mbewe, *God's Design for the Church*, Location 1443.

and leader, and without understanding the biblical teaching they are merely doing what they know.<sup>60</sup>

Too often a lack of theological training in a strong leader and captivating preacher, rather than being lamented, is used as proof of “Spiritual anointing.” An undeveloped theological and exegetical biblical foundation breeds the idea that it is the preacher, rather than Jesus Christ, who is the founder of the church. Power trumps holiness and humility, and personal charisma is more attractive than biblical truth and knowledge.

Mbewe has observed,

Sadly, it reaches levels where, even when such a leader has fallen into grievous, scandalous sin, he insists that he can neither be removed from office nor be disciplined in any way. He demands that those who are calling for his resignation should be the ones to leave because he is the founder of the church. It is as if he has an inalienable right to be the primary leader of the church, no matter what his spiritual state might be. There is need to reverse this trend and ensure that Jesus has no competition. He alone is the founder of the church. No human being paid the price to purchase the church. Only Christ did, and he demands holiness especially from church leaders.<sup>61</sup>

The way forward for the wayward churches of Nigeria must be contextually accurate biblical preaching and teaching. It is the only way to turn the church there back to the Bible and the gospel. Once true believers sense the difference between good exegesis and biblical interpretation modeled in their sermons and Bible studies, they will begin to be able to discern wrong from right and will, by the power of the Holy Spirit, choose the right. The church members will be able to read and understand the Bible for themselves and thus be empowered. Just as bad theology has spread, so can good theology. I believe this is the only

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60. See Chapter Three for the corrective: Theological Foundation: Preaching as Ambassadorship, Speaking God’s Word.

61. Mbewe, *God’s Design for the Church*, Location 583.

way for biblical preaching to begin to attract believers away from flashy preachers and the siren call of wealth and back to the cross of Jesus Christ.

### Preaching Itself Ignored by Some

Biblical preaching and teaching are central to Christian worship and practice, yet some churches of Nigeria have turned so far away from scriptural understanding that they have, in fact, given up sermons all together. In the opening moments of the church of Christ we read, “They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer” (Acts 2:42). Mbewe observes,

The preaching of the word of God must be central to the very definition of the church. This is why one of the very first achievements of pioneer missionaries who came to Africa was to translate the Bible into the language of the people. They knew how important the preaching of the Bible was to the health of Christians and of churches. Sadly, in too many of our churches in Africa, preaching does not occupy a central position anymore. Rather, we have many choirs that take turns on the same day—children’s choir, men’s choir, women’s choir, the main choir, and so on. By the time all these choirs have finished singing, everyone is ready to go home.<sup>62</sup>

The Nigerian church’s authentic African style of worship may rightly value music and participation of the congregation; however, leaving out the sermon is not a cultural omission but a theological one. It could be wondered if pastor popularity and church growth are in competition with strict biblical theological truth.

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62. Mbewe, *God's Design for the Church*, 398.

## Rapid Church Growth Increases the Need for More Exegetical Training

Though the health and wealth gospel and syncretistic spirituality have become endemic in Nigeria, it is most prevalent in the quickly growing independent African neo-Pentecostal or neo-charismatic churches.<sup>63</sup> There are many reasons for this, including the independent origins of charismatic Christianity and its wide influence.<sup>64</sup> The popularity of the prosperity gospel in Africa in general may be rooted in the African traditional notions that link the spiritual and prosperity as well as the purely human longing for health, happiness, and success.<sup>65</sup> Finally, the growth of the prosperity gospel and spiritual superstitions among African neo-Pentecostals may be related to the “praxis-driven spiritual ethos” of early Pentecostals and their hermeneutic, which read and understood the Bible with a focus on what believers should expect to get from

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63. Marius Nel, *The Prosperity Gospel in Africa: An African Pentecostal Hermeneutical Consideration* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock, 2020), xiii. See Chapter Two, Footnote 85 for Marius Nel description.

Luis Lugo, Director of the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life explains the terminology, “This diverse and dynamic branch of Christianity is difficult for even religious scholars to describe. Most agree, however, that it includes two major groups: pentecostals and charismatics. Together, they are sometimes referred to as “renewalists” because of their common belief in the spiritually renewing gifts of the Holy Spirit. Pentecostals belong either to one of the historical pentecostal denominations, such as the Assemblies of God and the Church of God in Christ, that have their roots in the American religious revivals of the early 20th century, or to newer, largely independent indigenous churches. These newer churches, sometimes labeled “neo-pentecostal” or “neo-charismatic,” number in the tens of thousands and are especially prevalent in Africa, Asia and Latin America.” “Charismatics share many of the experiences that are distinctive to pentecostalism but remain members of mainstream Protestant, Catholic and Orthodox denominations. This movement, sometimes referred to as “second wave” pentecostalism, emerged in significant numbers in the 1960s as part of what its members considered to be a much-needed spiritual renewal within these older churches.” Lugo, “Spirit and Power – A 10-Country Survey of Pentecostals,” 1-2, 86.

64. Nel, *The Prosperity Gospel in Africa*, xiii.

65. “African traditional religion and an African worldview define prosperity in a specific way that differs from the definition that serves the American version of the prosperity gospel. In Africa it is related to an enchanted worldview where evil spirits and angry ancestors cause poverty and illness.” Nel, *The Prosperity Gospel in Africa*, 199.

God, rather than on what the original authors may have actually been proposing to say theologically.<sup>66</sup> The solution is rooted in theology, just as the problem is.

Elliot Clark of Training Leaders International explains that the answer to unbiblical doctrine is to model how to interpret and apply the Scriptures:

We miss an opportunity to influence those within prosperity churches if we ignore these realities as we present or defend the truth. The prosperity gospel is more than a simplistic teaching that promises health and wealth to those with faith; a faithful response will not be simplistic either. Prosperity teaching is complicated, intertwining gross errors with gospel themes and biblical doctrine. Because of this, those who seek to address prosperity theology must do so precisely, with a scalpel and not a sword. Proof texting does not cure proof texting. The remedy to an unhealthy hermeneutic is not more of the same. It's not enough to be right, or even to have good intentions and zeal. We must also pay attention to the way we defend the faith. Most importantly, we'll want to do so modeling what it is to rightly handle the Scriptures.<sup>67</sup>

Modeling and teaching how to study and interpret the Scriptures, to “rightly handle” the Word, both contextually as well as pragmatically, is needed to turn this dark tide back to true biblical and yet an authentically African-style Christianity. Thoughtful Proclaimer inductive study aims to lead the preacher to discern the dual a(A)uthorial sermon purpose which will be both biblically and culturally (audience) contextual.

Some Nigerian theologians have taken note of the damage poor exegesis, syncretism, and the prosperity gospel has left in its wake and are setting out to train Christian leaders and preachers to read and understand the Bible as a way of ameliorating the problem. One such leader is Emmanuel Muhammed and his wife Grace Muhammed, the founders of Hebron Home

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66. Nel, *The Prosperity Gospel in Africa*, xiii.

67. Elliot Clark, “Don’t Oversimplify the Prosperity Gospel,” (accessed February 23, 2021, <https://trainingleadersinternational.org/articles/849/dont-oversimplify-the-prosperity-gospel>).

(the discipleship and leadership center which invited me to teach preaching) in Abuja, Nigeria.<sup>68</sup>

Emmanuel clarifies the issue:

You know this [prosperity gospel] is one of the major problems we have among the Christian churches in this country. Due to the level of poverty in the country and the reality and personal experiences of the pastors and members, the message of Christianity has turned into [a] transactional relationship with God instead of relational, which is the entire message of Christianity. Many come to God so that he can solve their problems. At best, some come to him so that they can escape hell (which I call fire insurance). While I believe God can do all the above, and that was part of the reason He came, there is a need for people to see Christianity as relationship! I believe through training and simplification of exegesis, like what you are doing, we will help my people to see their faith in context, instead of seeing God just as a “problem solver.”<sup>69</sup>

Clearly, solid hermeneutical and exegetical training for preachers is especially needed for lay preachers in Nigeria so they can learn how to think and preach biblically as they seek to serve Christ by making and growing true disciples in their context. I personally addressed the need I saw for biblical literacy and Christian devotion in my prayer letter from Nigeria:

So now I can see why Hebron Home wanted me to come and to bring the *Thoughtful Proclaimer* [my book] to teach pastors how to read the word for preaching . . . Topical/devotional preaching or preaching on Bible stories from the Old Testament is the norm. In this way, [preachers] can easily make the Bible say what they want it to, they told me. I know the men (yes, all men 25-35 depending on the day) who came wanted to be godly men of the Word, but they need mentors and teachers and leadership. So, please pray for the church of Nigeria! That God would raise up men and women of the Word who can preach and teach the Bible well. I think it is the greatest need.<sup>70</sup>

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68. Emmanuel Muhammed and his wife founded and run the Hebron Home in Abuja, Nigeria, for the purpose of training Christian leaders to know and rightly handle the Word of God. He and his wife are graduates of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. They have been a major supporter of the Thoughtful Proclaimer ministry to train preachers.

69. Emmanuel Muhammed, Personal Communication, December 12, 2020.

70. Elizabeth Anderson, prayer letter from Abuja, Nigeria, March 22, 2019.

The need for this training is immediate and intense in Nigeria especially because of the extremely rapid growth of the Christian church there. This growth has vastly outpaced the number of hermeneutically trained preachers. The number of Christians in Africa at the beginning of the twentieth century was about 9 million, but by the end of the twentieth century it was about 380 million, and it is still growing.<sup>71</sup> The largest number of Christians in Africa, well over 80 million, live in Nigeria. Though numbers vary between 48.8 and 50.8 percent, Christians in Nigeria now comprise about half of that large nation's population.<sup>72</sup>

The church in Africa is growing so rapidly that congregations often cannot even find buildings and must meet in classrooms and makeshift structures. Mbewe comments, "The church in Africa is full of zeal, though often this zeal lacks knowledge (Rom. 10:2)."<sup>73</sup> He continues:

Individuals whose knowledge of the Bible is still at kindergarten level [are] found leading a church in a village. Some of them do not even have a full Bible. Yet they are preaching wherever they find ears that are willing to listen. You will find lay preachers in streets and on buses and trains . . . There is a desperate need for more training in order to reduce the wildfires being produced by this zeal where knowledge is lacking. The normal "Bible College" structures used in the Western world to train future leaders and pastors cannot cope with this zeal and growth. Other forms need to be brought in.<sup>74</sup>

Flexible and adaptable training for Bible interpretation, such as the Thoughtful Proclaimer seminars, can begin to address this growing need before the degradation of the

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71. Mbewe, *God's Design for the Church*, Location 221, 2551.

72. Hackett et al., "Global Christianity: A Report on the Size and Distribution of the World's Christian Population," 11, 55.

73. Mbewe, *God's Design for the Church*, Location 224.

74. Mbewe, *God's Design for the Church*, Location 205-32.

country as a whole gets worse. Considering the incredible growth of the church in Africa in general and the problems the Christian church of Nigeria is experiencing, there is an enormous need for sound and practical exegetical training for expository preaching to be made accessible to pastors. Mbewe believes that the zeal and proliferation of the African church could be a blessing to the whole world if the unbiblical practices we have been discussing can be stopped from crippling its effectiveness.<sup>75</sup>

### Many Preachers Hunger for Teaching on How to Prepare Biblical Sermons

Emmanuel Muhammed shared with me the need and hunger of pastors for training in Nigeria:

The level of ignorance of the Scripture is extremely high among the pastors not to mention the members. It is also important to note that there two categories; the first are those who think they don't need training on anything from anyone, the rationale here is the Holy Spirit will reveal everything to them; the second group is those who realized that they need to be trained and that furth study will aid their ministry as the partner with the Holy Spirit. This group are usually hungry for learning.<sup>76</sup>

This last group of preachers are looking for practical ways to learn to understand and preach the Bible. Both some new preachers and several experienced preachers who were serious about their calling showed their enthusiasm for exegetical training by committing to a 5-day preaching seminar I offered through Hebron Home. Many faced serious obstacles in

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75. "The church on this continent currently has the greatest potential to bless the global church if only it can be healed of the vices that are crippling its effectiveness." Mbewe, *God's Design for the Church*, Location 275.

76. Emmanuel Muhammed, December 12, 2020.

answering their call to preach and several traveled daily from long distances for the opportunity to learn Bible interpretation and expository preaching.

The following prayer requests sent home to my friends describes the difficulties of preachers in Nigeria:

Pray for one pastor, a good preacher who knows the Word, but his mission is a tribe (several hours outside of Abuja) that is so removed from any sort of Judeo-Christian morality that he has trouble connecting with them on any level. Pray that he will find a way [to communicate the Word]. *[African tribal beliefs]*

Another pastor is a former Muslim who is a faithful believer, brave man of God, with a servant heart. He is studying the Word with Hebron Home, but his church denomination doesn't care about biblical teaching and preaching so they . . . won't let him . . . preach. He is discouraged. *[Degradation of biblical preaching]*

Pray for another converted Muslim who is seeking a place to serve God and be discipled but who keeps running into [corruption within] ministries where they want to use [his testimony] for fund raising instead of discipling him or helping him grow in the Word and in his faith. *[Christian corruption]*

And pray for several young men who want to grow in their faith and to be pastors, but all they know is a twisted prosperity gospel and a stylized form of preaching that depends on personal charisma and not truth. Help them to not give up and take the easy route, falling back on preaching that claims to be led by the "Holy Spirit" but which in truth has no biblical foundation. *[Reliance on the Spirit without the Bible]*

I am at once skeptical and hopeful that what passes for Christianity in Nigeria can be revived into the true church and that people can hear again God's Word through the Bible.<sup>77</sup>

Though these preachers came seeking training, in general their churches were not interested or willing to financially support them to attend the training let alone to attend seminary. Mbewe concurs, "The main excuse in Africa as to why so many churches are not involved in the training of pastors is the lack of money—imagined or real."<sup>78</sup>

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77. Elizabeth Anderson, prayer letter from Abuja, Nigeria, March 22, 2019.

78. Mbewe, *God's Design for the Church*, Location 2544.

But, an African perspective should be:

In no other profession would the [lack of professional preparation] be allowed. In fact, governments of African countries have noticed this confusion and are beginning to demand that pastors . . . be trained before they are allowed to take charge of churches. If this situation is going to be turned around, then the church in Africa will need to pay the price of time and money to support the work of training pastors.<sup>79</sup>

Sadly however, newly appointed pastors, self-appointed preachers, bi-vocational clergy, and preachers in churches who do not care whether they are theologically trained find limited support in their attempts to procure solid biblical training. Others with large or difficult ministries and missions do not have the time, income, or other resources available to them to leave for years of formal theological education. Left on their own, those who are serious about biblical preaching may see their only recourse for help in sermon preparation coming from listening to the sermons of popular Nigerian and American televangelist preachers, this further perpetuates the word of faith and prosperity gospel theologies. Others choose to depend wholly on what they hope is the anointing power of the Holy Spirit, whereby the Spirit will give them a sermon as they stand in the pulpit with their Bible in their pocket. Clearly, with no advance Bible study and little Bible knowledge, their sermons are likely to be based on their own inventiveness. Yet, with effort and guidance this direction can be changed.

### Upcoming Chapters

The rest of this thesis will discuss how the doctrine of inspiration undergirds my teaching of preaching, my philosophy of preaching which is ambassadorial and redemptive, the

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79. Mbewe, *God's Design for the Church*, Location 2561.

errors in theology that undergird the problems we discussed in this chapter, and the methods, results, and future of teaching lay preachers in Nigeria and elsewhere how to read and interpret the Bible for preaching. This will be worked out in Chapters Two through Five.

The method used, supported, explained, and tested in this thesis is found in the textbook, *Thoughtful Proclaimer: A Bottom-Up Guide to Preparing Bible Messages that Transform You from the Inside Out*. This text was used to teach the seminars that are the meat of this Project.<sup>80</sup> See the highlights of the book in Chapter Six and the Appendices A, B, and D. Finally, you will find the results of teaching the *Thoughtful Proclaimer Method* in Nigeria in Chapter Seven and Appendices C and E.

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80. See footnote 11.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION:

#### THE DOCTRINE OF INSPIRATION AND AN AUTHORIAL INTENT HERMENEUTIC

This chapter discusses the doctrine of inspiration and how one's view of inspiration determines how one reads and preaches the Bible. The purpose of this chapter is to recommend an authorial intent hermeneutic. I will also discuss how the different views of inspiration whether based on an inspired text view or an inspired author view lead to different views on Bible interpretation. I will articulate my view that the doctrine of authorial inspiration is foundational for teaching preaching because it fits with the biblical testimony of the canon itself as well as with the way we read and understand the Bible as literature.

The doctrine of authorial inspiration, unlike the view of textual inspiration that often ignores it, makes contextual and some degree of historical biblical exegesis a requirement for truly biblical preaching because we do not understand the Bible to be a supernaturally contrived text dropped down all at once from heaven, but historically grounded literature written by Spirit-inspired humans in different places, at different times, and for particular circumstances. And because the Bible is inspired by God, it is pertinent to our situation today (Rom 15:4). The Divine intent, the ultimate reason the Holy Spirit inspired the text, is the universal purpose for the passage. Our commitment to inspiration and to the authority of Scripture must take both these things, the divine purposes for scripture and the human reasons for writing, into account. So, preachers must pay attention, not only to the text itself, but to the

purposes of the individual inspired authors as well as the One who inspired the canon of Scripture in its entirety.

Invariably, some preachers come to Thoughtful Proclaimer training with an inspired text (not inspired author) view which allows for a one short verse or pericope-at-a-time sermon preaching mindset. This may come from a docetic reading of 2 Timothy 3:16, “All Scripture is breathed out by God and is profitable for. . .” that ignores the humanity of the text and the situation and purpose for the original writing. Some even come to the seminars hoping that the Holy Spirit will give them words to speak while standing in the pulpit without studying what God has already given them in his written Word at all. A few come looking for some new method that will ensure a vision, a miracle, or a direct and original word from the Lord. And many hope for a way to get a Spiritual injection that will make them into great preachers without the hours of prayer and humble study necessary to develop that kind of wisdom. But the method I tested in this thesis offered instead a way to encourage preachers to study the Lord’s Word deeply, fully, contextually, and yet Spiritually so that they can begin to preach biblically accurate sermons as they develop and grown into highly gifted expositors.

A key aspect in teaching Spirit-empowered preaching, which is one of the things the Nigerian preachers in the study aimed to learn about and which is what the Thoughtful Proclaimer method is ultimately about, is to help preachers to see that the Holy Spirit already gave us God’s inspired message in his written Word. This is one primary way that the doctrine of biblical inspiration applies to preaching.<sup>1</sup> The Holy Spirit inspired people, we call them biblical

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1. The idea of Spirit-empowered preaching means different things to different people. For example, it can mean that the sermon itself is empowered by the Holy Spirit, or that the presentation of the preaching is

authors, with the exact right words to convey God's heart and mind to the people of their original ancient context. There is a whole library of books in the Bible that preachers can read and grasp by the power of the same Spirit who caused them to be written down in the first place. So, the preacher's first Spirit-empowered task is to read the words God has already given us and soak in those words and digest them until they are internalized; until we are familiar with God's eternal purposes as they are displayed in each passage. Teaching preparation for correct Spirit-empowered preaching is based on teaching preachers to prayerfully read, read, read from the point of view that the Holy Spirit wants to empower them to know Him first in their study, at their desk, and as they walk through their week.<sup>2</sup>

The Thoughtful Proclaimer method facilitates this Spirit-empowered exegetical study by teaching the preacher to ask good contextual and exegetical questions of the text; questions that focus their Bible study on the biblical author's and also on God's universal purposes for his Word. This is in order to improve their ability to prepare and preach biblical, contextual, redemptive, and theologically accurate sermons in places like Nigeria. But in the final instance, it is the same Holy Spirit, the inspirer of Scripture's message, who must be the one to apply His words to the preacher's heart and the preacher's words to the hearts of their listeners.

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empowered by the Spirit, or even that the preacher is Spirit-empowered and so the sermon or presentation are not important. Spirit-empowered may mean all these things, or it may mean other things.

The Thoughtful Proclaimer method takes into account the Spirit's empowerment of the authors of Scripture, the empowerment of the preacher as they study to understand and apply the Scripture, the empowerment of the sermon presented by the preacher in the pulpit, and the Spirit's empowerment of those who are listening and who God wills to change.

2. By reading I mean reading whole books of the Bible and the whole of the Bible, not just individual verses or even lists of topical verses from a concordance, as helpful and wonderful as those may be to help us express the single authorial message further once we have discovered it.

I believe, then, that the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and the doctrine of inspiration are keys to teaching sermon preparation. In the following chapter (Chapter Three) I will discuss my philosophy of ambassadorial redemptive preaching, preaching done as God's ambassadors, which is a result of this authorial inspiration view of biblical inspiration. In Chapter Four I will consider the unbiblical theology that is proliferating in some Nigerian churches due to a lack of focus on context; in other words, a lack of good reading with a focus on the Holy Spirit's purposes for inspiring the individual book and the canon of the Bible. In Chapter Five we will look at how that has affected biblical interpretation since the reformation. Chapter Six and Seven will describe my attempt to rectify the situation.

### **Expository Preaching**

As I go further into this chapter's topic of inspiration it is important to locate the larger discussion within the sphere of teaching expository message preparation. There are many different views on what expository preaching is.<sup>3</sup> The view of expository preaching that I propose for teaching preachers in Nigeria is an ambassadorial proclamation of God's reconciling intent for the world portrayed in the original inspired author's intent as observed in a passage's rhetorical, historical, and canonical setting. Though Christ's purpose is to call all people to himself for eternity, according to Paul's letter to Timothy, along with eternal redemption,

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3. Haddon Robinson, a preeminent teacher of homiletics at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary for many years, defined expository preaching as "the communication of a biblical concept, derived from and transmitted through a historical, grammatical, and literary study of a passage in its context, which the Holy Spirit first applies to the personality and experience of the preacher, then through the preacher, applies to the hearers." Robinson, *Biblical Preaching*, Location 228.

preaching also has a transformational purpose. So Paul, who so often writes about salvation also writes that preaching is also “to reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching” (2 Tim 4:2).<sup>4</sup> Thus the purposes of preaching are grounded in the knowledge that God wants both to redeem us and bless our broken lives (Ps 73:26; Is 41:10; Matt 11:28; John 3:16; 12:29, 14:27; Rom 5:18; 2 Cor 5:15, 12:9; 1 Tim 2:6; Heb 2:9; 1 John 2:2)

My view of expository preaching, which will be clarified in Chapter Three, is ambassadorial and affirms that preaching is not merely to inform people about the Bible but also should persuade people to be, do, or think differently about something specifically as a result of God’s purposes spelled out by his inspired authors’ as reflected in their individual books and as highlighted in the intents of significant length portions (pericopes) of those books. God’s preachers are to be instruments by which he can speak and transform humans according to his good purposes when the preacher discerns those purposes clearly from within God’s written Word. Hereafter, we will just call this ambassadorial persuasive expository proclamation “preaching.”

Preaching, as practiced in many places including neo-charismatic and neo-pentecostal churches in Nigeria, has not reflected an inspired “author as authority” expository homiletic, but rather a “preacher as authority” homiletic (where the preacher determines the meaning of

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4. “For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.

Declare these things; exhort and rebuke with all authority. Let no one disregard you” (Titus 2:11-15).

a text).<sup>5</sup> Unfortunately in Nigeria, it is these churches that appear to be growing exponentially.<sup>6</sup>

It is hoped that teaching preachers to respect the original authors of the Bible as God's

mouthpieces as they prepare sermons will help them to convey God's fuller purposes (divine

intent). This idea of the inspired biblical author being the authority of their own message is a

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5. In this thesis Pentecostal with a capital "P" will refer to Pentecostal denominations. Pentecostal with a lower case "p" will refer to those who emphasize the pentecostal experience or ethos, including charismatics. The term "neo-charismatic" refers to independent pentecostal churches who do not have a system of accountability over them. This group frequently understands that there is an infilling of the Holy Spirit, which occurs separately from salvation, and which results in speaking of tongues. I use "charismatic" in this thesis-project to refer to those who practice or believe that the supernatural gifts of the Holy Spirit, such as speaking in tongues, supernatural healing, and other supernatural events still actively and frequently occur. Charismatic Christians are often found in other denominations or main-line churches as well. The distinctions are not always clear. In practice, I may interchange pentecostal and charismatic as there is not clear rule for distinguishing the two views.

Gary Maxey writes, "Nigeria has the dubious distinction of being home to more Christian denominations than any other country in the world. No one knows the exact number, but it is certainly in the tens of thousands. It would be foolish to argue that proliferation of this type is not a weakness, and especially in view of the fact that in an overwhelming percentage of these churches outside accountability is virtually absent. Moreover, pastors leading a high number of these groups have little or no internal accountability as well. The 'pastocracy' that prevails in many Nigerian churches is unparalleled anywhere else in the world." Maxey, *The Seduction of the Nigerian Church*.

6. By claiming to speak for God but not from God's Word given, preachers inappropriately claim God's authority. Maxey explains, "There is certainly nothing wrong per se with large churches, and we can see even within the book of Acts that at Pentecost crowds of 3,000 and 5,000 were recorded. Yet in the context we are describing, a vicious cycle can easily emerge as leaders discover that by introducing new and strange doctrines the crowds increase." Maxey, *The Seduction of the Nigerian Church*.

Femi Bitrus Adeleye writes that some Nigerian preachers have easily bent the words of Scripture or even claimed new revelations to be from God. "The best tool in the hands of preachers of a different gospel is manipulation of the word of God. Through a private interpretation, a prophecy or a new revelation, the truths of the word of God can be distorted. It is easy to over-emphasize or de-emphasize the Word to suit our subjective purposes." Femi Bitrus Adeleye, *Preachers of a Different Gospel* (Carlisle, Cumbria, UK: Langham Creative Projects, 2011), 6.

Marius Nel explains that this type of preaching new extra-biblical doctrine is made more possible because "some of the neo-Pentecostal pastors do not hold themselves accountable to anybody or any church or ministry board." He continues, "The independent neo-Pentecostal or neo-charismatic churches responsible for preaching the prosperity message are expanding in Africa faster even than Islam, at twice the rate of the Roman Catholic Church, and at three times that of the other non-Catholic religious traditions, even considerably stemming the growth of the African Instituted Churches in West Africa." Some of the neo-Pentecostal pastors do not hold themselves accountable to anybody or any church or ministry board. Nel, *The Prosperity Gospel in Africa*, 1-3.

much-needed antidote to sermons based on extrabiblical and even unbiblical messages built, it is claimed, on a preacher's special direct "revelation knowledge."<sup>7</sup>

### The Doctrine of Inspiration and Preaching

The doctrine of inspiration teaches that the Holy Spirit enabled the human authors of the Bible to record what God desired to have written in the Scriptures.<sup>8</sup> This doctrine leads to a dual a(A)uthorial view of biblical interpretation, meaning that we are interested in understanding two authors at once. That is, we seek to understand the Author, God, through the writings of the small "a" authors, the humans who did his bidding in authoring the books of the Bible. A commitment to dual a(A)uthorial view of inspiration leads a preacher to pay attention to the biblical author's inspired purposes for writing and the Divine purpose which will be canonically contextual, redemptive in nature, and Christ-focused. The doctrine of inspiration leads to a hermeneutic that is especially helpful for teaching preachers in places like

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7. Marius Nel sarcastically reports that, "Supernatural revelations form a "wonderful new interpretation" of the Bible, the foundation of the new Christianity that brings healing and prosperity to all who possessed this revelation knowledge of the Bible. The cultic elements form the most distinctive and popular doctrines of the prosperity movement, and they owe their historical origins to E.W. Kenyon." Nel, *The Prosperity Gospel in Africa*, 145.

This idea that the Bible should transform us (see Romans 8:29 on being transformed into Christ-likeness) seems to be the opposite of what many in Nigeria have been led to understand. Their idea is that they can use the words of the Bible, "Words of Faith," to transform God and make him bless them, and so on—their goal being earthly wealth and health rather than holiness. However, my small observation, the pastor of the ECWA denomination church in Abuja, Nigeria, preached one of the best expository sermons I have heard in a long time. This indicates that though the Christian culture of Nigeria and many churches may be heading into a prosperity gospel perspective, the Christian churches and seminaries of Nigeria are not by any means all theologically off base.

8. For a thorough discussion on inspiration, see Carl F. H. Henry, *God, Revelation, and Authority* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1999), 129-61.

Nigeria how to interpret Scripture for preaching because it emphasizes thorough reading and meditation under the power of the Holy Spirit as foundational.

John wrote to his first-century congregation, “But the anointing that you received from him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone should teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about everything, and is true, and is no lie—just as it has taught you, abide in him” (1 John 2:27). The result of the doctrine of inspiration is that the Spirit-indwelt and empowered reader of the Bible does not need a PhD to understand it.<sup>9</sup> Rather, the Bible must be studied deeply, completely and humbly under the power of the Holy Spirit to be understood and applied properly.

If the Holy Spirit inspired human authors to write God’s words which convey God’s purposes, rather than focusing on a one-dimensional text-only view of inspiration, we should aim to hear the purposes of God through discerning the intent of the authors his Spirit inspired. The doctrine of inspiration requires the one who studies the Word to place an emphasis on the intents purposefully conveyed by the written discourse of both the human writer and the Divine Speaker who speaks to the believer’s heart and mind through the reading of the Word. Listening for both authors yields the dual a(A)uthorial intent. These intents are the goal, rather than a simple paraphrase or interpretation of a passage.

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9. “But, as it is written, ‘What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him’— these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. For who knows a person’s thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God. And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual” (1 Cor 2:9-13).

The problems in the church of Nigeria, which we saw in Chapter One, do not necessarily stem from ignoring the Bible itself but rather stem from a hermeneutic that does not take seriously the interpretative goal of understanding the original inspired author's intent or of meditating on the full law and gospel together in order to hear the Holy Spirit's purposes for inspiring a particular book at a particular time and place (focusing on the book length context).

Rather, some churches in Nigeria, and certainly elsewhere in the world as well, are led by preachers who seem to have a (mis)understanding of biblical inspiration that would allow for basing a sermon on atomistic (single verses), non-contextual, topical (rather than large swaths that respect the inspired authors), and even personal interpretations. These interpretations, though perhaps a part of many preacher's natural train of thought, none the less may easily ignore the Holy Spirit's intent for inspiring the original author and thus may miss the divine intent for a passage today (canonical intent).

Rather, preachers can safeguard their message and preach more theologically accurate sermons by interpreting the Bible using inductive Bible study and Spirit-led meditation to understand the original biblical author's meaning and God's universal purposes (dual authorial or what I call the Commander's Intent).<sup>10</sup> This level of interpretation is possible because of this particular understanding of the doctrine of inspiration that is author-based, not merely text-based.<sup>11</sup> Text-based sermons are those that focus on the meaning of the words,

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10. This is the Thoughtful Proclaimer Method. See these key verses regarding the Holy Spirit's help with interpretation: John 14:25-26, 15:4-7.

11. The view of inspiration of the author requires the reader to consider the author's purposes for writing as evidenced from the full text (book) as well as the Holy Spirit's purposes as evidenced in the entire Bible which he inspired. The inspired text view means that any text, standing alone, because it is God's Word, can be properly understood and applied even when taken out of its textual, authorial, or the fuller canonical context.

usually of a verse or paragraph, but without necessarily grounding that understanding in the Holy Spirit's universal purposes for inspiring a passage to be included in Scripture or without focusing on the inspired author's intents for the whole book or letter or poem they wrote. This must be done if we presume to understand a text properly. This view of inspiration respects biblical authors as inspired by the Holy Spirit and so assumes God meant for his words to be understood by those who are abiding in Christ, empowered by the Holy Spirit, and meditating on and aiming to obey them.

This dual authorial view of inspiration allows for practical and accessible Bible interpretation for preachers in Nigeria because it does not rely heavily on critical or scholarly study or original language skills, as helpful as these skills might be. It focuses more on the spiritual-both the Holy Spirit who inspired the text and the Holy Spirit who indwells and instructs the preacher (Ezek 36:27; John 14:15-17, 26; 15:26; Rom 8:5-10; Eph 1:13). It stresses reading well and learning to ask appropriate contextual and theological questions that can be answered, largely, using the Bible itself.<sup>12</sup> In this way, biblical interpretation for sermon preparation becomes a spiritually enriching exercise that yields contextually accurate biblical messages.<sup>13</sup> Nigerian preachers are sometimes surprised when they realize that the Holy Spirit gives more power in the pulpit when he has been most powerful in their study.

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12. A good study Bible is always a helpful tool to augment this study but is not completely necessary.

13. To many Nigerian preachers, the spiritual aspects are as or more important than theological accuracy.

## Textual Meaning Is Constrained by Authorial Intent

The way I explain this dual a(A)uthorial intent hermeneutic is to ask preachers, “What would, for example Paul (or the author of whichever book), want you to say regarding this text if he were in your study with you or in your congregation this week?” Robert Stein, a scholar on the synoptic gospels, wrote regarding authorial inspiration and intent, “Not only is the author-oriented approach to meaning the commonsense approach to interpreting the Bible, I believe it is also the one that best fits an evangelical view of the Bible’s inspiration. If we believe that the ‘meaning’ of the Bible is inspired, where is this meaning to be found? Surely it is not found in the ink and paper used to convey that meaning.”<sup>14</sup> Though clearly, we can only begin our discernment of the Bible through the ink on the paper, we read to find out what the author meant; to understand why he wrote what he did; not merely to know what a text says.

This author-oriented approach to meaning is interdenominational and fits the traditional Pentecostal, Catholic, as well as the evangelical understanding of the power of the Holy Spirit to impart and apply the Bible to believers today.<sup>15</sup> This is because biblical inspiration,

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14. Robert H. Stein, now retired, most recently served as senior professor of New Testament interpretation at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. He previously taught at Bethel Seminary. Robert H. Stein, “The Benefits of an Author-Oriented Approach to Hermeneutics,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 44, no. 3 (September 2001): 456.

15. According to Marius Nel, “African Pentecostals use an unsophisticated and rather biblicist and literalist-fundamentalist way of reading and interpreting the Bible, as is also true of a bigger part of the African Independent/Indigenous/Instituted Churches movement. They read the Bible for its literal sense, with a high view of the authority of Scripture, emphasizing supernatural elements of Scripture, including miracles, visions, and healings, and venerating the Old Testament as much, or more, than the New Testament. To them, the Bible speaks to everyday, real world issues of poverty and debt, famine and urban crises, racial and gender oppression, and state brutality and persecution. Their ideas of supernatural warfare and healing serve to underline their biblical and theological conservatism.” A little further along he adds that in this way, they can avoid “any critical or systematic thinking that was associated with theological or academic expertise because such knowledge was regarded by Pentecostals as endangering the individual’s faith and corrupting the church.” Thus, showing them a Spirit-filled way of reading for the literal inspired sense including the canonical sense provides a corrective that fits with their theology.

as we have defined it, indicates that by understanding the biblical author's main intent in his context we can better understand God's intent (the one who inspired the text) as well.

In writing on biblical interpretation, (small "a") authorial intent is well defined by Raju Kunjummen, associate professor of biblical languages and Old Testament at Michigan Theological Seminary. "[Intent is] the purpose of the author which governs the meaning of the text, to be discerned from the text and relevant context."<sup>16</sup> E. D. Hirsch, in his now classic effort to combat existential interpretation of literature, defines the author's intent as congruent with textual meaning.<sup>17</sup> The true meaning of a text is found, not only in grammatical structures and ancient vocabulary, but more to the point, by thorough reading (considering grammar and vocabulary) for contextual and intertextual intent.

Kevin Vanhoozer, a theologian who focuses on hermeneutics and postmodernism, writes about the importance of considering original meaning of the text,

The goal of interpretation is to recover the original meaning of the text. Many methods have been proposed for recovering the original meaning of the biblical text: the

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As for the Catholic perspective on biblical exegesis, according to Peter Williamson, the Catholic view of exegesis is the same as what we are teaching (with the exception of the theological amendment): "Note that the 'proper context' of biblical texts is twofold, which leads to a two-step process of determining the meaning of texts. First an exegete must determine the meaning of a text in its particular literary and historical setting. This is the literal sense, 'that which has been expressed directly by the human authors.... [and which] is intended also by God, as principal author' (II.B.1.c). Second, an exegete must determine the meaning of a text 'in the context of the wider canon of Scripture', i.e., the canonical sense. Both the particular literary-historical and the canonical contexts are the proper context of every biblical text, since 'each individual book [of the Bible] only becomes biblical in the light of the canon as a whole.' He continues with this amendment: 'The work of the exegete centers on the biblical text to explain its meaning, while the theologian considers a wider array of sources (the patristic writings, conciliar definitions, other magisterial documents, etc.) in the service of a more comprehensive presentation of Christian faith.' Peter Williamson, *Catholic Principles for Interpreting Scripture: A Study of the Pontifical Biblical Commission's The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church*, vol. 22, *Subsidia Biblica* (Rome: Pontificio Istituto Biblica, 2001), 277-78.

16. Raju D. Kunjummen, "The Single Intent of Scripture: Critical Examination of a Theological Construct," *Grace Theological Journal* 7.1 (1986): 83.

17. E. D. Hirsch, *Validity in Interpretation* (New Haven,: Yale University Press, 1967), 24-25.

grammatico-historical method, form criticism, and redaction criticism, to name but a few. Despite their differences, which stem from different views about how the text came to be and about its history, these approaches agree that recovery of original meaning alone makes for authentic interpretation. For if the author is the point of origin, then “original meaning” is identical with “author’s meaning.” The original meaning alone is the authentic meaning, the author’s actual, authoritative meaning. Author, authority, authentic—all notions that, when bound together, reinforce the idea (or idol) of the sign’s reliability.<sup>18</sup>

Respect for any author is the first key to finding and understanding his or her true purpose for writing and the author’s meaning. Authorial intention remains an appropriate initial goal for biblical interpretation. Seeking authorial intent also encourages preachers to immerse themselves in the larger rhetorical structure from which individual preaching texts emerge, to grapple with both their linguistic and pragmatic perspective, and to engage with the distant horizon of the biblical world. As John Goldingay, Old Testament scholar, helpfully notes regarding authorial intent, the impossibility of total understanding does not negate the worth of attempting whatever degree of understanding will turn out to be possible.<sup>19</sup>

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18. Kevin Vanhoozer is the Research Professor of Systematic Theology at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. He served as Blanchard Professor of Theology at Wheaton College and Graduate School and as Senior Lecturer in Theology and Religious Studies at New College in the University of Edinburgh. See Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?: the Bible, the Reader, and the Morality of Literary Knowledge*, Anniv. ed. ed. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1998), 46.

19. John Goldingay is a British Old Testament scholar, translator, and Anglican clergyman. He is the David Allan Hubbard Professor Emeritus of Old Testament in the School of Theology of Fuller Theological Seminary in California. See J. Goldingay, *Models for Interpretation of Scripture* (Clements Publishing, 2004), 50. quoted in Susan Anne Groom, *Linguistic Analysis of Biblical Hebrew* (Carlisle, Cumbria; Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster Press, 2003), xxi.

## Divine Intent is Determined Canonically

Because biblical texts are supernaturally inspired by the Holy Spirit who indwells the believer, they do have a spiritual element which cannot be disregarded. Yet as important as the role of the Holy Spirit is to understanding the meaning of a text, the doctrine of inspiration reminds us that the Holy Spirit's first and most authoritative meaning is found in the inspired intent of the original earthly authors. Preachers who are reading a text should not confuse personal and spiritual responses with the original author's inspired meaning. They should be careful to not use the Holy Spirit's words to bolster their own ideas or sermon topics. Quite the opposite, the preacher is the servant of God and His Word. In other words, subsequent revelation and human inspiration is not equivalent to original Inspiration but is subject to it.<sup>20</sup>

Discerning the Divine intent, the reason for the Spirit to bring the text forth, remains the main goal for interpretation. We seek not just to understand the small "a" author's intent, as important a first step as that is; but we seek ultimately to discern the Divine intent, capital "A" Authorial intent. This Divine intent gives us a subject and purpose of our sermons. It will never be totally removed from the inspired author's intent either. The individual biblical author's intent for a passage will be the same as the Divine intent or will be subsumed in it. This is critical for Old Testament passages, because the preacher has not just a single Old Testament passage to study, but the larger canon (both Old and New Testaments) from which to seek the Divine intent for the Old Testament passage. In looking for the Divine intent, we are looking for

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20. In Chapter Four I will deal with the prosperity gospel's view on revelation, "revelation knowledge," and apostolic authority. In this view, the reader's response to a passage, especially if the reader claims spiritual authority, is equal to or even more authoritative than the original author's intent for the passage.

the reasons the Holy Spirit had for bringing forth the text as the Spirit knew the ancient biblical situation as well as today's.

The Divine Intent is found by first discerning the Spirit's original intent for inspiring the biblical author. The Divine intent is rooted in the original authorial intent though it may at times be a fuller (not wholly different) universal purpose for the passage. This fullness is not discernable by the imagination, conviction, or even inspiration of the preacher, but is understood by considering the message of the original author and also the rest of the Canon. The Divine intent, includes the author's intent, and is first understood from an understanding of the author's intent, but it goes further and is key because we will preach this passage in yet a third context, our current context today whether that is Nigeria or elsewhere. In our teaching methods we speak of studying Scripture in context, and it must be acknowledged that the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, since he is the Author, the subject, and the interpreter, is in a sense the most important "context" of Scripture. The Divine intent of the Spirit remains stable and supra-cultural.

To clarify, a dual a(A)uthorial intent hermeneutic based on authorial inspiration will yield a more trustworthy result than exegesis focused solely on textual meaning of a passage or on a reader's personal spiritual response to a text (though both the meaning of the words and a believer's response are important for interpretation). Focus on the Spirit-led author view of inspiration also necessitates a correction of atomistic verse-at-a-time understandings of the Bible which may not represent the author's fuller view. Verses out of context, topical study of the Bible, and spiritual meanings have led to an over-focus on things like self, materialism, and

the spirit world in Nigeria. But a dual a(A)uthorial view of inspiration leads to redemptive in nature, and Christ-focused.

A hermeneutic based the Spirit's inspiration of the author of the full canon, is Trinitarian in the sense that we look for the purpose of the Spirit inspired canon which is rooted in the love of the Father for his creation as evidenced in the redemption offered through the sending of his Son.<sup>21</sup> The inspired canon, according to its own testimony, is practical and useful for teaching, encouraging, and evangelization. But it requires lengthy reading of whole books to understand the author's point, and it necessitates a comprehensive understanding of the Old and New Testaments in order to appreciate God's point of view most clearly. So, particularly in a place where complete readings and systematic study of long books has not historically been valued, we must strongly encourage our view of the importance of the doctrine of inspiration for interpretation. The following sections will be an in-depth, forensic examination of the doctrine of inspiration, what the Bible claims for itself, and why should we be teaching preaching based on it.

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<sup>21</sup> See Chapters Three and Four for more on this topic.

## Relating the Biblical Author to the Doctrine of Plenary Inspiration

N. T. Wright, an English theologian and Anglican bishop, explains “inspiration” as “a shorthand way of talking about the belief that by his Spirit God guided the very different writers and editors, so that the books they produced were the books God intended his people to have.”<sup>22</sup> But how this process happened varies from author to author and is not completely clear.

Three painters from the seventeenth century sought to illustrate three views on how biblical inspiration occurred. In photographs of Caravaggio’s “St. Matthew and the Angel” (painted in 1602 but later destroyed by fire), Matthew looks disheveled, almost blind, and weak while a heavenly figure directs the movement of his hand on the page of the book that bears his name.<sup>23</sup> In another painting, “The Inspiration of St. Matthew,” also painted in 1602 by Caravaggio but for a different church, Matthew is portrayed as writing at his desk while hovering over his shoulder peers a heavenly being who seems to be influencing Matthew’s

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22. N. T. Wright, *Scripture and the Authority of God* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2005), 27-28.

23. This illustrates a mechanical, dynamic view of inspiration whereby the author is thought to have been insensible, overwhelmed by the Holy Spirit. This view of inspiration would place a high degree of emphasis on the text and not the author or necessarily their intent. William Evans, and S. Maxwell Coder, “Inspiration,” in *The Great Doctrines of the Bible* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1974), 194. Michelangelo Merisi Caravaggio, Saint Matthew and the Angel, 1602, Destroyed by fire in 1945, Contarelli Chapel in the church of San Luigi dei Francesi in Rome, accessed June 26, 2021, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saint\\_Matthew\\_and\\_the\\_Angel](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saint_Matthew_and_the_Angel).

mind as to what to write.<sup>24</sup> Finally, Rembrandt's "St. Matthew and the Angel" (1661) shows a wise-looking Matthew listening as a heavenly being whispers words into his ear.<sup>25</sup>

So, was it the hand of God mystically moving the pen, some heavenly influence on the author's heart and mind, whispered dictation, or some less mysterious editorial or compilation process? F. F. Bruce, a British biblical scholar who supported the historical reliability of the New Testament, once complained, "Wherever five 'advanced thinkers' assemble, at least six theories as to inspiration are likely to be ventilated."<sup>26</sup> This is because the Bible itself is not as specific about how inspiration occurred as theologians might suggest.<sup>27</sup> But however inspiration occurred, what the Bible makes clear is that we should seek to understand and obey the gift given to us as the Word of God.<sup>28</sup>

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24. This painting may portray for us an "idea" theory of inspiration, whereby the ideas are those of the Holy Spirit but that the author used their own words to express them. Michelangelo Merisi Caravaggio, The Inspiration of Saint Matthew, 1602, Contarelli chapel altar in the church of San Luigi dei Francesi in Rome, Italy, accessed June 26, 2021, <https://www.caravaggio.org/inspiration-of-saint-matthew.jsp>.

25. Clearly, there is overlap and difference of opinion not only as to which, if any, of these methods the Spirit used to inspire the Bible. There is also a difference, depending on who you read, as to what these theories are called and the details of them. Scripture itself even points to differences in how different authors were inspired as well. Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn, St. Matthew and the Angel, 1661, oil on canvas, Musee de Louvre, Paris, accessed June 26, 2021, <https://rkd.nl/en/explore/images/58986>.

26. Benjamin B. Warfield, *The Works of Benjamin B. Warfield: Revelation and Inspiration*, vol. 1 (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2008), 51.

27. According to J. Ireland, a "limited view" of inspiration sees some aspects of Scripture as "more inspired" than others. A "natural view" of inspiration understands the inspiration of Scripture in terms of "the inherent religious genius" of the authors. An "illumination theory" of inspiration understands inspiration as the Holy Spirit illuminating for the writers of Scripture "divine truths" which they then wrote down. J. Ireland, "The History of the Doctrine of Inspiration," in *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*, ed. John D. Barry et. al. (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016).

28. See 1 John 5:2. Brevard S. Childs, *Biblical Theology: A Proposal*, Facets Edition, Facets Series (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2002), 31.

And because we understand the Bible to be, in some sense, verbally inspired, the preacher ought to listen for God's voice in the voices of the authors he inspired. Peter Adam, vicar emeritus of St. Jude's Carlton in Melbourne, Australia, and former principal of Ridley College Melbourne, reminds us that because the Bible is inspired, we can hear God in every passage, but all with God's ultimate message:

Although we recognize God's working through different authors at different times and at different places, so that Scripture often speaks in a varied voice, nevertheless we should be looking for coherence and unity that are produced by the mind of the primary author God. Because the Bible is God's words, we should also expect to find that the words of God are useful and have contemporary power to bring salvation to us, to change us, and to transform us.<sup>29</sup>

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29. Peter Adam, *Speaking God's Words: A Practical Theology of Preaching* (Regent College Publishing, 2004), 105.

## The Bible's Self-Attestation Regarding Inspiration

The term “inspiration” comes from the Latin translation of 2 Timothy 3:16. In Latin, “All Scripture is breathed out by God” is *omnis scriptura divinitus inspirata*.<sup>30</sup> The Greek word Paul used when speaking of the Old Testament here was “God breathed,” or θεόπνευστος (*theopneustos*).<sup>31</sup> “God breathed” is also how the inspired Word claims God gave his very life to Adam.<sup>32</sup>

Peter gives us another perspective in 2 Peter 1:21. There, the English Standard Version translates ἀλλ’ ὑπὸ πνεύματος ἁγίου φερόμενοι ἐλάλησαν ἑαυτοῦ θεοῦ ἄνθρωποι as “For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.”<sup>33</sup> Peter uses the Greek word φερόμενοι (*pheromenoi*) to indicate someone being carried along or as having their heart or mind “moved by” the Spirit of God.<sup>34</sup>

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30. *Biblia Sacra Vulgata: iuxta Vulgatem Versionem*, electronic edition of the 3rd edition ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1969), 2 Timothy 3:16.

31. According to Norman Geisler, this idea of enthusiasm became associated with the Holy Spirit “in the post-Reformation era when possession by a divine spirit (pneuma) was regarded as necessarily accompanied by the intense stimulation of the emotions. In turn this notion of immanence contributed to the rise of modern religious subjectivism.” This may be related to the idea that the authors of Scripture were somehow carried away into an ecstatic state when they penned Scripture. See Norman L. Geisler, and William E. Nix., *A General Introduction to the Bible*, Rev. and expanded ed. (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1986), 34.

32. Regarding the term θεόπνευστος and Adam, the Septuagint has Καὶ ἔπλασεν ὁ Θεὸς τὸν ἄνθρωπον, χοῦν ἀπὸ τῆς γῆς· καὶ ἐνεφύσησεν εἰς τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ πνοὴν ζωῆς, καὶ ἐγένετο ὁ ἄνθρωπος εἰς ψυχὴν ζῶσαν (“And God formed the human with earth from the land and blew into his face the breath of life, and the human came into being as a living soul”; Gen 2:7). *The Lexham English Septuagint*, ed. Rick Brannan, Ken M. Penner, Israel Loken, Michael Aubrey, and Isaiah Hoogendyk (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2021). The ESV has, “Then the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature” (Gen 2:7).

33. *Novum Testamentum Graece*, ed. Kurt Aland et al. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2012), 2 Peter 1:21.

34. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, s.v. “φερόμενοι.”

The idea seems to be that the Holy Spirit either carried or moved the writers from a place or moved them from an earthly state to a heavenly or spiritual state from which they wrote. In fact, we see that some authors, like Isaiah, Ezekiel, and John, were “carried away” by the Holy Spirit, whether in bodily form or with visions.<sup>35</sup> In some cases the “carrying away” was literal, but in all cases, the Holy Spirit caused the authors of the Bible to write those truths which the Spirit of God wants to disclose to us who are spiritual.<sup>36</sup>

The Bible, being God’s full written revelation, tells us all what God feels we need to know in regard to the inspiration of his Word, but it never tries to prove that it is God’s Word; it assumes it and states it categorically and repeatedly.<sup>37</sup> Its primary purpose is not historical or even theological but to bear witness to Jesus Christ for one purpose, that we would be reconciled to God.

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35. In the case of John and his Revelation (Rev 1:9ff.) and Isaiah and the coals on his mouth (Isa 6ff.), it seems the Spirit transported them to another place, at least in some sense.

36. Paul summed up his ministry (of which what we have left is the letters considered by the church to be inspired) like this: “Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God. And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual. The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. The spiritual person judges all things, but is himself to be judged by no one. ‘For who has understood the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?’ But we have the mind of Christ” (1 Cor 2:12-16).

37. The words, “Word of God” (*theos* or *Elohim*) are found 50 times in relation to God’s Word written, handed down, prophesied, or preached: Num 24:4, 16; 1 Sam 9:27; 2 Sam 16:23; 1 Kgs 12:22; Ps 107:11; Prov 30:5; Mat 15:6; Mark 7:13; Luke 3:2; 5:1; 8:11, 21; 11:28; John 3:34; 8:47; 10:35; Acts 6:2, 7; 8:14; 11:1; 12:24; 13:5, 7, 46; 17:13; 18:11; Rom 9:6; 1 Cor 14:36; Eph 6:17; Col 1:25; 1 Thess 2:13; 1 Tim 4:5; 2 Tim 2:9; Titus 2:5; Heb 4:12; 6:5; 11:3; 13:7; 1 Pet 1:23; 2 Pet 3:5; 1 John 2:14; Rev 1:2, 9; 6:9; 17:17; 19:9; 20:4.

Additionally, there are 276 verses that use the words “the word(s) of the Lord” or (YHWH) in the Old Testament. Many of these speak to God’s word disclosed or revealed though at times these two phrases, “Word of God” or “word of the Lord,” seem to be interchangeable and refer to the Torah.

The “word of the Lord” (*kyrios*) is seen 14 times in the New Testament and may generally refer to the words of Christ. (That is a total of 350 references in Scripture to the word of God in some form or another.) The word of God is also referred to as “his word” and “words of (eternal) life,” and probably many other things. Many times the formula “it is written” precedes a passage, showing the authority accorded to the quoted passage.

“And the Father who sent me has himself borne witness about me. His voice you have never heard, his form you have never seen, and you do not have his word abiding in you, for you do not believe the one whom he has sent. You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life.” (John 5:37-40)

### Verbal Plenary Inspiration

The view of inspiration taken by this Thesis-Project is called “verbal plenary inspiration.”

“Plenary” signifies that the whole Bible is equally inspired.<sup>38</sup> “Verbal” signifies that inspiration extends to the whole, to all of a text—not merely to the ideas but to the actual words also.<sup>39</sup>

Some evangelicals require verbal inspiration to mean that the Holy Spirit actually spoke the words verbally to the authors, but this is a misunderstanding of the doctrine.<sup>40</sup> Plenary inspiration indicates that the resulting full literary work of each of the books of the original authors is a key part of God’s one whole book, the inspired Holy Bible.<sup>41</sup>

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38. “‘Plenary inspiration’ focuses on the extent of the influence of God’s Spirit over the content of Scripture: all Scripture is ‘God-breathed’ (2 Tim. 3:16).” E. J. Schnabel, “Scripture” in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander and Brian S. Rosner (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2000), 41.

39. “‘Verbal inspiration’ affirms that the influence of God’s Spirit over the content of Scripture cannot be limited to ideas or doctrines but extends to the smallest units of meaning (verbal inspiration is often, but wrongly, associated with a theory of mechanical dictation). It is a matter of debate among evangelicals whether the notion of the reliability and trustworthiness of Scripture carries with it the notion of ‘factual inerrancy.’” Schnabel, “Scripture” in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, 41.

40. The requirement that God verbally spoke each word to the authors is a misunderstanding of “plenary verbal.” Authorial inspiration (which includes author’s, assistants, and editors who worked prior to canonization) leaves the idea of exactly how a biblical book came to its final canonized form open and allows differences in how inspiration brought about the formation of different individual books. For example, when reading books such as Jeremiah, the idea of direct dictation comes into question since the originals were destroyed after the writing process. Whether it was Jeremiah or Baruch, or Paul or his amanuensis who held the pen; and whether or not the Holy Spirit whispered words in ears, placed meanings in hearts, or inspired one version and then inspired a second version, does not make the book any less an inspired part of the canon. (See Jeremiah 36:32 where regarding the rewriting of the scroll it says, “And many similar words were added to them.”)

41. This is more a practical view of inspiration which fits the texts we have in our Bibles, since we have no original manuscripts.

Carl Henry, who provided intellectual and institutional leadership to the neo-evangelical movement in the mid-to-late twentieth century, defines inspiration as “a supernatural influence upon divinely chosen prophets and apostles whereby the Spirit of God assures the truth and trustworthiness of their oral and written proclamation.”<sup>42</sup> What we have today are trustworthy copies of literary works, whole books—copies of manuscripts for which no two copies of the original were exactly the same.

Beyond that, unlike the Quran, we believe that the Bible is no less inspired when it is translated from the original languages. Indeed, the Bible the apostles and early church used, the Septuagint, was a translation.<sup>43</sup> In some Nigerian churches, the inspired text is equated with the King James Version only. Not only does an over-focus on text (rather than meaning) correlate to a view that a particular translation is inspired; it also leads to non-contextual reader response or church community-based responses, and charismatic “spiritual” textual misappropriation as inspired texts and individual verses are considered to not need context for proper interpretation.

For our purposes we note that verbal plenary inspiration, rather than allowing for interpretation and sermons based on individual verses (as some assert), requires a preacher to read and understand whole texts in order to properly respect the inspired author’s intents for their words in context, both literary and historical. Verses or chapters cannot stand alone but fit together as pieces of culturally based literature. Plenary inspiration requires that no one part of

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42. Henry, *God, Revelation, and Authority*, 129.

43. Rather than worry about whether the Holy Spirit spoke individual words into the biblical authors’ ears or inspired their minds with ideas, I believe the doctrine of inspiration requires us to listen for the Holy Spirit’s meaning and objective as we closely follow the written record of the authors.

the Bible is complete except as a part of the whole. The context of any passage is its book and its place in redemptive history.

Clearly the reality of inspiration is impossible to put into an image or even to grasp from reading a textbook, and Scripture itself indicates that the process was different from one book to another.<sup>44</sup> We also observe that the earliest biblical manuscripts available to us today show evidence of editorial processes which preceded the church's canonization of certain texts.<sup>45</sup>

Michael Grisanti, Old Testament professor at the Master's Seminary in Los Angeles, allows that biblical inspiration includes the edits and revisions that were part of the authorial process. In other words, no one knows if one, or two, or more prophets were writing under the name of Isaiah. But none of this matters to dual a(A)uthorial intent hermeneutic because it cares only

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44. We see several less direct but equally interesting references to inspiration such as Acts 1:16, where Peter says the Scripture had to be fulfilled which the Holy Spirit spoke beforehand by the mouth of David concerning Judas. Moses is recorded in Deut 10:1-2 as claiming God himself carved the stones, "The LORD said to me, 'Cut for yourself two tablets of stone like the first, and come up to me on the mountain and make an ark of wood. And I will write on the tablets the words that were on the first tablets that you broke, and you shall put them in the ark.'" (The fact that Moses could break stones that God wrote on with his finger indicates for me the possibility that God's Words are both truly incarnate and truly earthbound in some major sense. See also Exod 31:18; 24:4; compare Deut 31:9; 31:22.) The prophets that followed Moses say they spoke the word of the Lord (YHWH). Clearly, they considered themselves ambassadors of YHWH. We see this in 1 Sam 15:10; 2 Sam 24:11; 1 Kgs 6:11; 18:1; 21:17, 28; Isa 38:4. Other Old Testament passages refer to prophets writing down the words they thus received (compare 1 Sam 10:25; Jer 36; Isa 8:1; and Ecc 12:12). And some texts imply that some Old Testament authors did take down God's words as dictated. (e.g., Jer 36:4 ). Ireland, "The History of the Doctrine of Inspiration," in *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*.

45. When we speak of editing, the focus is usually on the Hebrew Bible. The Society for Biblical Literature points to what they call "empirical evidence." "With the term 'empirical evidence' we refer to such cases where the same passage or text is preserved and documented in parallel versions (e.g., the Passover laws in Lev 23 and Num 28, the description of the destruction of Jerusalem in 2 Kgs 25 and Jer 52, or the prophecies concerning Moab in Isa 15-16 and Jer 48). Factual changes that took place in the transmission of the text can be observed by comparing these versions. Another kind of empirical evidence can be found among the manifold variations that occur in the textual traditions. Here we are referring to the differences between the Masoretic Text (MT), the Samaritan Pentateuch (SP), biblical manuscripts from Qumran, and the ancient translations, the Septuagint (LXX) in particular." R. Müller, J. Pakkala, and R.B. Haar, *Evidence of Editing: Growth and Change of Texts in the Hebrew Bible* (SBL Press, 2014), 2.

about the received canonical materials which disclose the Spirit's inspired purposes.<sup>46</sup> It is the authors or editors and their final text that the confirmers of the canon considered inspired.<sup>47</sup> It is the purpose and intent of this complete and final product that is sought.

It is God's will to have his intentions for us conveyed in human terms, in various genres, and in the context of whole books written and edited by inspired human authors.<sup>48</sup> The biblical authors were not inspired to write mystical spiritual individual words or unconnected inspirational ideas but rather whole books which are direct communication from God, given to us in historical contexts and in the format and genres of human literature.<sup>49</sup>

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46. The Bible's self-attestation of inspiration, strictly speaking, refer to the Old Testament Scriptures. Bruce Metzger reminds us that "Like every pious Jew, Jesus accepted the Hebrew Scriptures as the word of God and frequently argued from them in his teaching and controversies. And in this respect, he was followed by the first Christian preachers and teachers, who appealed to them to prove the correctness of the Christian faith. The high regard of the primitive Church for the Old Testament . . . was fundamentally due to the conviction that its contents had been inspired by God." Bruce M. Metzger, *The Canon of the New Testament: Its Origin, Development, and Significance* (Oxford, England: Clarendon Press), 2. However, before this Jewish canon of books was even totally settled, the letters of both Peter and Paul spoke of the Hebrew Scripture as being inspired by God. Simultaneously, "side by side with the old Jewish canon, and without in any way displacing it, there [sprang] up a new, Christian canon." This new canon, even while under formation itself, was accepted as inspired by the early church alongside the Old Testament. Metzger wrote, "The [final] recognition of the canonical status of the several books of the New Testament was the result of a long and gradual process, in the course of which certain writings, regarded [by the church] as authoritative, were separated from a much larger body of early Christian literature" Metzger, *The Canon of the New Testament: Its Origin, Development, and Significance*, 1.

47. Subsequent to the initial writing of a biblical book or books, yet prior to canonicity, a God-chosen individual or prophetic figure under the superintendence of the Holy Spirit could adjust, revise, or update pre-existing biblical material in order to make a given Scripture passage understandable to succeeding generations. Those revisions, which occurred within the compositional history of the Old Testament, are also inspired and inerrant. Michael A. Grisanti, "'Inspiration, Inerrancy, And The OT Canon: The Place Of Textual Updating In An Inerrant View Of Scripture'," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 44, no. December, 4 (2001): 582.

48. See the following passages which speak to earthly authors and their purposes: Matt 2:17, Matt 24:15; Rom 1:1-3; 1 Cor 5:9; 1 John 1:1-4.

49. It is precisely this mystical view of inspiration that allows for the flourishing of the Prosperity Gospel. The idea that every word, phrase, or verse is equally inspired outside of its context allows for proof texting whereby single verses are used to interpret other passages. Passages understood outside of their literary and historical context can be used for many purposes unintended by the Holy Spirit who inspired them. See the perspective of Marius Nel: Nel, *The Prosperity Gospel in Africa*, 224.

This indicates that the Holy Spirit means for us to read the books he inspired fully and prayerfully, listening for God's voice. Since they are written by humans, we also read normally to understand the author's intents and purposes.<sup>50</sup> The Bible is one unified book that contains a library of books by divinely inspired human writers working at different times in redemption history, but always with the redemption of humankind in God's mind (Luke 2:38, 21:28; Rom 3:24, 8:23; 1 Cor 1:30; Eph 1:7, 4:30; Col 1:14; Heb 9:12). Since God chose to write his message through the voices and pens of human authors, he obviously means for the words that are written be read, as Kunjummen and Hirsch would indicate, to understand the author's purposes.

We read the books of the Bible, then, in some ways, as we would read the books of a human author, trying to understand what they are saying by considering what kind of text (good news, theology, commentary, poetry) they are writing and what they mean to convey (directions, teaching, a story, or a sermon). We read from start to finish in attempt to discover why they were writing (the genre and purpose), and from that we can understand what they were saying (the meaning).

Peter Williamson, a Catholic theologian clarifies: "Just as Jesus is fully God and fully human, so Scripture is, at the same time, entirely God's Word and entirely the words of the

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50. The appendix of Gordon Fee's handbook on New Testament exegesis claims that all three editions have been based on four theological assumptions: "(1) that along with the Old Testament, the New Testament is Holy Scripture, God's Word given to his people for their life together within the community of faith; (2) that God has spoken his Word through human authors and texts; (3) that the biblical texts themselves reflect a detectable level of both divine and human intentionality; and (4) that the task of exegesis is to understand the divine-human intention locked within the text, not in an attempt to control the text but so that the Word might lead its readers to the text's true end—obedience." Gordon D. Fee, *New Testament Exegesis : a Handbook for Students and Pastors*, 3rd ed. (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 181.

human authors. Just as the eternal Word (Christ) took on the limitations of a human being to reveal God to us, so God has chosen to communicate his divine voice through the limitations of human writing and human language.”<sup>51</sup> The individual authors carry the Divine voice and so their meaning and intent is the initial goal of interpretation. In his preface to the commentary on Romans, John Calvin asserted that the whole duty of a commentary on Scripture is “to lay open the mind of the writer.”<sup>52</sup> In other words, the author’s thinking matters to the meaning. John L. Thompson, professor of both historical and Reformed theology at Fuller Theological Seminary, assures us that in thus speaking, Calvin was not overly concerned to distinguish between the divine and human authors of any particular text: the rules for interpretation, in either case, were the same. Preachers prepare to speak for God by first understanding the intents and purposes of the writer and from there they discern God’s message, his purposes. One effect of Calvin’s doctrine of inspiration was to confirm the importance of the Bible’s embeddedness in history and culture.<sup>53</sup> Thus an attitude of respect for authorial intent, and not just text meaning, follows from a belief in biblical inspiration. Even so, the Bible itself leaves room for different views of how the inspiration of individual books occurred.

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51. Peter S. Williamson is a senior fellow at the St. Paul Center for Biblical Theology and assistant professor of sacred Scripture at Sacred Heart Major Seminary in Detroit, Michigan. He is the author of *Catholic Principles for Interpreting Scripture: A Study of the Pontifical Biblical Commission’s The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church*, vol. 22, *Subsidia Biblica* (Rome, Italy: Pontificio Istituto Biblica, 2001). He is a Catholic convert from Presbyterianism, a missionary, and an active in the ecumenical charismatic renewal movements. “Dr. Peter Williamson,” St. Paul Center for Biblical Theology, accessed June 24, 2021, <https://stpaulcenter.com/dr-peter-williamson/>.

52. D. F. Wright, ““Calvin, John,”” in *Biographical Dictionary of Evangelicals*, ed. D. W. Bebbington Timothy Larsen, Mark A. Noll, and Steve Carter (; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003).

53. John L. Thompson, ““John Calvin,”” in *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible*, ed. Kevin J. Vanhoozer et al. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 96.

## Biblical Authors Are Inspired, Not Merely the Resulting Texts

We have said above that God's voice is heard through his authors; that when read or heard they convey God's discourse to us.<sup>54</sup> The basic meaning of a text is what the inspired author meant for you to understand when you read it. My view of Bible interpretation for preaching is based on this view of inspiration which calls for the study of texts not only to discover the meaning of the words but also to discern the Spirit's reasons for inspiring the words his authors wrote, the author's intent. In other words, the texts are the means to understanding the authors who are inspired.

Williamson, in writing on Catholic interpretation, explains, "Since the literal sense is defined as what the human authors expressed (implying that they basically understood what they expressed), the literal sense by itself only partially achieves the goal of Christian interpretation, namely, to understand the divine communication in Scripture."<sup>55</sup> His view is that the inspired authors are speaking for God. He treads carefully by saying, "This re-orientation of the exegetical task toward the intention of the divine Author could suggest either redefining the literal sense as the canonical sense (which would resemble its definition by Aquinas and the

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54. John Frame has written volubly about God's speech: "God's speech to man is real speech. It is very much like one person speaking to another. God speaks so that we can understand him and respond appropriately. Appropriate responses are of many kinds: belief, obedience, affection, repentance, laughter, pain, sadness, and so on. God's speech is often propositional: God's conveying information to us. But it is far more than that. It includes all the features, functions, beauty, and richness of language that we see in human communication, and more. So the concept I wish to defend is broader than the 'propositional revelation' that we argued so ardently forty years ago, though propositional revelation is part of it. My thesis is that God's word, in all its qualities and aspects, is a personal communication from him to us." John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of the Word of God, A Theology of Lordship*, ed. John M. Frame (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2010), 3.

55. Williamson, *Catholic Principles for Interpreting Scripture: A Study of the Pontifical Biblical Commission's The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church*, vol. 22, 185.

Reformers) or retaining the definition of the literal sense as the human author's meaning but explicitly subordinating it to the canonical sense." This second view is what I teach. The literal sense of a passage must be understood in light of the canon. In this way the earthly author's and heavenly Author's intents, not just the text, are studied and interpreted.<sup>56</sup>

So then, in this hermeneutic for preaching, the biblical author (who was writing fully under God's inspiration) should be initially considered to be in charge of the text's literal meaning and its message, rather than the preacher. But ultimately, we seek God's intention for His Word. This is an authorial inspiration rather than purely textual inspiration view.<sup>57</sup> Though evangelicals affirm the inspiration of the authors, since they only have the texts, they often have become textualists rather than focusing on intent.<sup>58</sup> Preachers, for their part, should first

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56. I have been asked, "So are [the author's or the canonical] intents extra-textual? If so, where does the authority reside in such identified intents?" My reply is that the author's intents will not be extra-textual, except by way of explanation as occasionally needed due to historical or cultural background difficulties. The canon's intents are also not extra-textual. Martin Luther's axiom of *sola scriptura* includes the idea that authority of Scripture resides within its own self-testimony and is not sought from an outside source. It is conceded however, that later church councils, an outside source, determined the boundaries of the canon of scripture. Beyond that, authority for interpreting scripture has been ceded to scripture itself by the protestant church as well as the writer of this thesis.

57. A dual a(A)uthorial intention view of inspiration necessitates that, for the preacher who stands in the pulpit to speak for God (the divine Author), an initial understanding of the reasons and purposes God's Spirit caused the writing (earthly authorial intent) to occur should be sought in order to lead us to the Divine intention, which is the purpose to be preached. In other words, an understanding of the inspired author's intent for his book should be pursued from both careful (natural) and prayerful (supernatural) reading of passages as part of the whole book and the canon. I am not suggesting that for a sermon, the preacher needs to study in depth the exact historical, political, geological, and cultural situations occurring at the time of writing, but rather that the preacher must seek and consider the information that the Spirit and the author felt were necessary for him or her to know and so included in the book being preaching on and in the rest of the canon. Sometimes, more information is helpful, and scholars who have studied God's Word and written on it can be a wonderful resource.

58. Some might argue against my disparagement of the word "textualist" I am saying that meaning is found in the text and that intent is found from meaning when it is understood from texts in context-written context, authorial context, and canonical context. Biblical texts alone cannot carry true meaning outside of God's purposes for them. No matter what they "say," what they "mean" is what God intended them to mean. For example, some argue that God is not loving yet they forget that God is love. God defines love so he cannot be unloving.

submit themselves to discerning the biblical authors' intent, because they were inspired, as they seek to convey and explain God's purposes to others from their words.<sup>59</sup>

### Inspiration Requires the Preacher to Read Fully

At our preaching training, a majority of the preachers admitted to not reading the Bible regularly and, in fact, to not reading it to any degree even for preparing sermons. So, for teaching preaching in Nigeria, encouraging reading of whole books of the Bible and the study of the whole Bible is key.<sup>60</sup> And, because the doctrine of inspiration teaches that God speaks to his

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59. Beyond reading the Bible as literature, Nicholas Wolterstorff has shown that because the Bible is double discourse (human and divine) it can be studied through speech act theory, studying the Bible as both the discourse of the author but also as divine discourse. Speech act theory was not used in the teaching of preachers in Nigeria, but it brings about a new and interesting way of acknowledging further the inspiration of the authors and Author of the Bible. To simplify this idea for preachers in Nigeria and in the Thoughtful Proclaimer method, I encouraged active and intense listening to the Word.

Richard Briggs, who has studied speech act theory for biblical texts extensively, writes, "In many ways, Nicholas Wolterstorff's 1995 work *Divine Discourse* represents a long-overdue attempt to explore just how far the conceptuality of speech act theory can clarify such concerns. Wolterstorff argues that divine illocutions can be carried by human locutions, and that since the performing of illocutions in the public domain is what it is to speak, it can thus be literally true that God speaks in Scripture (N. Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse: Philosophical Reflections on the Claim that God Speaks* (Cambridge University Press, 1995), 75-129.) [Briggs continues, Wolterstorff] in fact concludes that God's speaking is a topic generally obscured (even in Barth) by the idea of God's self-revelation, and he sets out something of a manifesto for viewing the biblical text as divine speech, understood as God's speech actions. Since Scripture is evidently also human speech actions, [Wolterstorff] advocates the notion of 'double discourse' and calls for a corresponding double hermeneutic: to interpret the mediating human discourse for human illocutions, and the mediated divine discourse for divine ones (Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse: Philosophical Reflections on the Claim that God Speaks*, 183-222.)." Richard Briggs, "Speech Act Theory," in *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible*, ed. Kevin J. Vanhoozer, Craig G. Bartholomew, Daniel J. Treier, and N. T. Wright. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 765.

For an excellent critique of Wolterstorff however, see Brevard S. Childs, "Speech-Act Theory and Biblical Interpretation," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 58, 4 (2005), <https://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0036930605001468>.

60. This is true not only in Nigeria, though perhaps they are more honest. It appears, when teaching Thoughtful Proclaimer preaching, that most lay (unlike in Nigeria, "lay" in the United States usually refers to those without a bachelor's or graduate degree of some sort in Theology or Bible) preachers in the United States also do not consider reading more than perhaps a chapter with a chapter before and after it for context. The doctrine of inspiration indicates to me that a whole book should be read, at least initially, before preaching on a section of it.

people through his Word supernaturally but also naturally, the preacher must take care to remember that our own sinful human nature is still a threat to cause us to misunderstand God's intentions (John 5:37-40). Because of this, the preacher's first natural reading is done judiciously and as fully as possible seeking to understand about what and why the author is writing before we assume that we can hear God's supernatural revelation to us based on it.<sup>61</sup>

This caution is especially necessary in Nigeria where, as we read in Chapter One, Sunday Jide Komolafe reports that, "It is difficult to imagine how the faithful have interiorized the materialistic to such an extent that everything connected with church or God has been identified primarily with one thing: irreducible material acquisition."<sup>62</sup> Indulging in some allegory: by reading thoroughly and completely (contextually) we put on the belt of truth which, along with the breastplate of righteousness, will help us extinguish the flaming darts of the evil one, prior to preaching the sword of the spirit.<sup>63</sup>

To be clear, the Bible never describes itself as either a transubstantiated document (which was written by humans but which is now become divine) or a human-free supernatural text dropped down from heaven or dug up from the sand to be appropriated by us for the

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61. Though some may not appreciate the idea of intellectual understanding preceding spiritual revelation, the discipline of it may open the way for God's further spiritual revelation without as much of the confusion of our sinful nature and emotions. When the Bible suggests we are to love the Lord our God with all of our heart, soul, and mind, it recognizes that our mind, our God-given intellect, is an important part of our love and understanding for him. Interestingly, when Jesus quotes Deuteronomy, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul" or "with all your . . . might," he switches up the words and uses the word *διάνοια* (*dianoia*), the faculty of thinking, comprehending, reasoning, understanding, intelligence, the mind. Compare Matt 22:37; Mark 12:30; Luke 10:27 with Deut 6:5; 10:6; 30:6.

62. Komolafe, *The Transformation of African Christianity*, 383.

63. See Ephesians 6:10-20 for Paul's metaphorical charge to preachers and all believers to put on the whole armor of God.

purpose of writing a great sermon.<sup>64</sup> Rather, we affirm the Bible to be, in a sense, incarnational; God's words to us written in human terms, written first for specific reasons at appointed times and in geographical locations. Especially for preaching, in other words for speaking for God, we cannot jump over the earthly authors to get to God but must walk with them first.

Perhaps more to the point, each book of the Bible was composed for certain theological reasons and purposes which we can and should seek to discern if we are to understand and preach an individual text as something God-purposed with theological intent.<sup>65</sup> The author's intent for his whole book limits the meaning for portions of his book. An author would not, unless to make some kind of point, write something that goes against or is outside of this book's intent.<sup>66</sup>

Though purposes and intents are very closely related, purposes can be thought of as the reasons an author writes (they answer why a text was written in the past). Intents are what the

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64. It is unlikely, for example, that Paul wrote Romans to be divided up into verses or even paragraphs to be preached one at a time. Because of the way Paul, in particular, writes long treatises which make full sense only when read at once, his greatest messages are often misconstrued to mean the absolute opposite of what he is saying. We observe his train of thought by following his cogent yet lengthy arguments as he makes his points and purposes clear over the course of several chapters. When broken up into short "preaching pericopes" his message loses its purposeful thrust. Paul lays out well-thought-out arguments and traps to make his point (e.g., Romans 1:18–2:11 contains Paul's initial point that the Jews and the Gentiles, in fact all, are equally guilty of sin rather than making the point, as some assume, that some sinners are worse sinners than others).

65. In the Thoughtful Proclaimer text and teaching these theological intents are called the "Purposes of the Passage."

66. In explaining exegetical theology, Walter Kaiser, an Old Testament scholar, former professor of Old Testament, and former president of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, agrees that for preaching, we must first understand what an author's purpose for the whole book is. "Thus, while our goal is to learn and to be able to state the unifying theme of the whole book in a single sentence or, if absolutely necessary, in a few sentences, we cannot state what that unifying theme consists of until we have made some preliminary inspections of the total work." Kaiser continues, "Of course, if the author has flatly declared what his work is all about, either in his preface or conclusion, this task is greatly simplified." Walter C. Kaiser, *Toward an Exegetical Theology: Biblical Exegesis for Preaching and Teaching* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1998), 72.

author means to have happen as a result of the text (the illocution and perlocution).<sup>67</sup> Yet, the preacher need not know everything about either the historical and cultural backgrounds, or the author's personality, or his psychological state; we need only to know enough of his setting and context to understand what he means to have happen as a result of his text being read.<sup>68</sup> This is because the Bible is not an ancient text only, but one inspired by our God and the self-same Spirit who indwells the believer. So, contra Schleiermacher's need to recover an author's psychological consciousness and academia's study of source criticism, the hermeneutic

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67. Speech act theory adds to our understanding of divine-human authorship and how authors mean to do something with their texts. Authors are active and intentional when writing. If we consider the purpose of Bible interpretation to be to find the author's meaning or intent as making a cake, the ingredients are exegeted, the recipe is rhetorically studied to see how it went together, and speech act can help us understand how we are meant to eat and respond to the cake. Grant Osborne prescribes speech act theory for biblical interpretation. In fact he indicates that "Hirsch must be modified with the philosophically stronger technique of 'speech-act theory,' that movement from Wittgenstein to Searle to Thiselton and Vanhoozer that recognizes that both speech and written communication contain three actions—locutionary (what it says), illocutionary (what the author intends it to do), and perlocutionary (the actual effect it has in the reader or listener) . . . The interpreter is studying the movements of a text and seeking to uncover both meaning and significance in these three dimensions." Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral : a Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, Rev. and expanded, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 23..

Abraham Kuruvilla doesn't mention the term "speech act" but uses the concept to some extent by asking what the text is "doing" or means to do and by speaking of the projected world in front of a text. Abraham Kuruvilla, *Privilege the Text!: A Theological Hermeneutic for Preaching* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2013), 32.39. Kuruvilla writes, "In any text, an author is always doing something with what he/she is saying. This concept is particularly critical for biblical interpretation for preaching, an endeavor geared to accomplish life-change. For such purposes, one must view the biblical text as saying something in order to accomplish some purpose. Without comprehending what the author is doing with what he is saying, there can be no valid application." Kuruvilla, *Privilege the Text!: A Theological Hermeneutic for Preaching*, 52.

In his article on using speech acts in biblical interpretation, J. Eugene Botha clarifies: "Language and words are not neutral carriers of meaning, but actually have effects and achieve [them]. People can indeed do things with words. This [is] even more significant if one takes the nature of biblical texts into consideration: these texts were not intended to be literary products; they were pragmatic, created in a real life situation with a view to persuade, to change attitudes, to get people to do things and to act in a specific way." J. Eugene Botha, "Speech Act Theory and Biblical Interpretation," *Neotestamentica* 42, 2 (2007): 276, New Testament Society of Southern Africa, accessed 18-01-2020 02:55 UTC, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43048637>. 276.

68. I am articulating here a general explanation of authorial intent. In teaching sermon preparation I do not go "behind the text" to seek out the original manuscripts or sources for example. It is enough to recommend that the preacher recognize the texts literary features and genre. For simplicity, I will generalize that there is a text and a reader. For a more thorough discussion of the Author, Implied Author, Narrator, Narratee, Implied Reader, and Reader, see Tremper III Longman, "Literary Approaches to Biblical Interpretation," in *Foundations of Contemporary Interpretation*, ed. Moisés Silva (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 145.

undergirding of this project does not require the preacher to know whether Moses penned, with his own hand, the full original manuscripts of the Pentateuch.<sup>69</sup> I do not need to reconstruct the assumed manuscripts behind the texts.<sup>70</sup> None of that matters greatly to the preacher who seeks the presumed author's meaning in the inspired canonical text. My hermeneutic is captured well in Grant Osborne's statement, "The implied author and the implied reader in the text . . . provide an indispensable perspective for the intended meaning of a text. While postmodernists separate the real author from the implied author, I would not. The implied author is the conscious representation of the real author in the text."<sup>71</sup>

This view of inspiration with an emphasis on the importance of understanding the author's or implied author's purposes for writing and the intent of the passage for the reader makes a profound difference in both preparation for preaching and in defining a sermon's purpose. In this second half of this chapter, we will dig down more deeply into the practical importance of the original author's intent for understanding textual purpose, the Commander's Intent, for preaching.

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69. Schleiermacher, who is considered the father of modern hermeneutics, felt the goal of interpretation to be understanding the text as well as or better than its author did, and to understand the author better than the author knew himself. For Schleiermacher, interpreters gain knowledge of authorial intention through imagination and intuition rather than strictly basing it on inferences made through the text. His emphasis on the author's psychological disposition, which is difficult if not impossible to discern, instead of bolstering a view toward authorial intent eventually brought author-centered interpretation into disrepute. Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?*, 25, 26, 231.

70. For instance, "Along about the 18th century, scholars began to question whether the book of Isaiah was written by the prophet Isaiah or by others. In 1775, J. C. Döderlein divided Isaiah 40–66 from Isaiah 1–39. J. G. Eichorn (1778–83), proposed that Isaiah 40–66 was written by a different, sixth-century BC author than Isaiah 1–39. B. Duhm, in 1892, argued that chapters 56–66 are not related to chapters 40–55 and were instead written in the postexilic era of Ezra and Nehemiah (around 450 BC)." Stéphane Beaulieu, "Deutero-Isaiah," in *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*, ed. John D. Barry et al (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016).

71. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral : a Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, 519.

## The Practical Importance of Author Intent for Preaching

African neo-charismatic hermeneutics have tended to ignore authorial intent.<sup>72</sup>

Traditional Pentecostal hermeneutics emphasize that the Holy Spirit not only inspired the Bible but also animates the Scriptures and empowers believers, equipping them for ministry and witness.<sup>73</sup> I concur that deep understanding of a text involves such animation.<sup>74</sup> While other evangelicals may emphasize theological orthodoxy in their understanding of Scripture, Pentecostals have traditionally emphasized orthopraxy; in other words, the Bible is not just about propositional truth but is also about immediate and experiential understanding; about response and action.<sup>75</sup>

As a consequence of this view, African independent neo-charismatic preachers and neo-pentecostal preachers understand every word of Scripture as a specific word for them without regard to authorial purpose or original context, understanding themselves to be essentially part of the original context.<sup>76</sup> While theologically, believers are a very real continuation of Scripture's

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72. Neo-charismatic or neo-pentecostal refers to new and independent branches of the church that develop their own theologies, not based on a denominations beliefs or creeds. They are continuationist and, because they have no governance outside themselves, their pastors may have theological views that lie outside denominational Christianity, including Pentecostalism. For more on how I use these terms, see Chapter One, Footnote 63.

73. D. Rance, "Fulfilling the Apostolic Mandate in Apostolic Power: Seeking a Spirit-driven Missiology and Praxis," (2009), 8. Quoted in Marius Nel, "Attempting to Define a Pentecostal Hermeneutics," *Scriptura* 114, 1 (2015): 3, <http://scriptura.journals.ac.za>.

74. Walter C. Kaiser, "Concluding Observations," in *Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics: The Search for Meaning*, ed. Walter C. Kaiser Jr. and Moisés Silva (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007), 328. quoted in Nel, "Attempting to Define a Pentecostal Hermeneutics," 5.

75. Nel, "Attempting to Define a Pentecostal Hermeneutics," 5, 15.

76. Elizabeth Mburu writes, "The hermeneutical gaps for African interpreters may be significantly less than those faced by Western interpreters, whose cultures are far removed from that of the Bible." Elsewhere she comments, "There is one other key factor that must serve as a foundation for the entire process: All conclusions

events, by ignoring the theological and contextual distance between the time of inspired writing and the time of reading, preachers disregard not just historical and cultural context but also the literary and canonical context which are key to true understanding of meaning. In other words, by immediately jumping to text application with no regard to the author's purpose or a book's place in redemptive history, a preacher may easily miss the truth the Holy Spirit means to convey today.<sup>77</sup> So rather than a continuationist reading, this way of reading simply opens the way for misunderstanding God's inspired message.<sup>78</sup>

Reading individual verses and texts discretely, as though they are written by God directly to us today, ignores the fact that the human authors were inspired by God to write exactly what they wrote, in exactly the rhetorical and literary form they wrote it, at the time in redemptive history that they wrote it, and to the particular people who had particular

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regarding the text must be rooted in an understanding of the culture and worldview of the Bible. Only by understanding both our African realities and biblical realities can we avoid the dichotomous approach that is found even among graduates of theological institutions in Africa." Elizabeth Mburu, *African Hermeneutics, Langham Creative Projects* (Plateau State, Nigeria; Carlisle, Cumbria: HippoBooks; Langham Publishing, 2019), 39, 20. Elizabeth Mburu has a PhD from Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, North Carolina, USA. She is an associate professor of New Testament and Greek at International Leadership University, Africa International University and Pan-Africa Christian University in Nairobi, Kenya. Dr Mburu is on the board of the Africa Bible Commentary and is the editorial coordinator and New Testament editor for its revision.

77. "Some theologians today emphasize a continuity between original inspiration and subsequent illumination; while such language is open to abuse, Christians in general agree that the Spirit who acted in inspiration remains active in providing understanding." Craig S. Keener, *Spirit Hermeneutics: Reading Scripture in Light of Pentecost* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2016), 250.

78. Nel explains further the African Pentecostal view in his book on the African prosperity movement: "The basic difference between a part of Protestantism and the Pentecostal movement [which is widely practiced in Nigeria], including the prosperity movement, is that [Protestantism] accepts a cessationist viewpoint, that God's direct dealings and immediate involvement with humankind and [inspiration by] direct 'dictation' ceased somewhere during the course of the first century, perhaps with the death of the last apostle who was an eyewitness of Jesus' ministry, leaving no room for divine intervention, signs, wonders, and other miracles. The prosperity movement, like Pentecostalism, is based on a continuationist perspective and reads the Bible with the expectation that the same God who revealed God's power and grace to people in Israel and the early church, still works in the same way in the contemporary lives of people and nations." Nel, *The Prosperity Gospel in Africa*, Location 5398.

theological issues. N. T. Wright says, “A contextual reading is in fact an incarnational reading of scripture, paying attention to the full humanity both of the text and of its readers.”<sup>79</sup> So, the dual a(A)uthorship view of inspiration sees the Bible as both fully divine and as fully human. Reading the Bible as primarily divine and ignoring its humanity presents inherent danger for one who intends to act on or preach on a passage.<sup>80</sup> The read-it and act-on-it style of interpretation for texts, since it takes the Word out of its author’s world and context, makes the Bible essentially into one’s personal fortune cookie.

Craig Keener, himself a charismatic believer and highly respected exegete, agrees. “Inspiration does not make texts any less texts. Whether or not one wishes to speak of the authors’ intention, one cannot easily avoid speaking of what the text meant in its originating context.”<sup>81</sup> However, in Nigeria, as elsewhere, belief in a version of the doctrine of textual inspiration that ignores the author’s human context has caused some preachers to believe that what they feel the Bible means to them personally is the inspired meaning irrespective of original inspiration. This view confuses “revelation,” what God is saying to individuals from a text today, with inspiration, or to state it another way, it confuses personal significance with inspired meaning.<sup>82</sup> Admittedly, this problem is not unlike the devotional readings of Scripture

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79. By this, Wright is not stating that the Bible is incarnated, like Jesus, but that like Jesus its authorship can be considered fully human and fully divine. Wright, *Scripture and the Authority of God*, 94.

80. Nel, “Attempting to Define a Pentecostal Hermeneutics,” 12.

81. Craig Keener is professor of New Testament at Asbury Theological Seminary and president of the Evangelical Theological Society. Keener, *Spirit Hermeneutics: Reading Scripture in Light of Pentecost*, 126.

82. Nel has studied the history of Pentecostal theological training and hermeneutics. He concludes that though Pentecostals have come a long way from their anti-intellectual roots, still “the developing hermeneutic, [is] resulting in a growing divergence between Pentecostal pastors and theologians, [and] has stated affinities with the original Pentecostal hermeneutic [which was] characterised by an emphasis on the historical contexts of biblical narratives at the cost of a focus on the intent of the inspired’ authors and an emphasis on the immediacy of the

most Christians practice. But the difference for preachers, despite their denomination or creed, is that preachers are responsible to get it right. As James wrote in his Epistle, “those who teach will be judged with greater strictness.”<sup>83</sup>

It is not a charismatic continuationist and spiritual reading that can be the problem, then, it is incomplete reading.<sup>84</sup> Preachers need to submerge themselves deeply into the rhetorical strategies of the original author in order to understand the Holy Spirit’s canonical and redemptive purposes. Then they can approach a full understanding and appreciation of what the inspirer of the author, what God is still saying today.

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text, its multiple meanings and relevance for here and now.” See Marius Nel, “Development of Theological Training and Hermeneutics in Pentecostalism: a Historical Perspective and Analysis,” *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae (SHE)* 42, 2 (2016): 23, <https://dx.doi.org/http://dx.doi.org/10.17159/2412-4265/2016/1322>.

83. See James 3.

84. Keener tellingly describes one Pentecostal scholar who “apparently using prescriptively a description of popular Pentecostal practice, suggests that a fuller understanding the Bible is not particularly desirable, that ‘encounter’ is preferable to ‘exegesis,’ that ‘spiritualising readers’ need ‘little interest . . . in the surface meaning of the text’ or attention ‘to the original intention of the author.’”

On this view, Pentecostal hermeneutics opposes, in an adversarial manner, appreciating the text in its own context and suggests that “Pentecostals are infinitely less interested in” what texts mean to their original audiences than in how the texts challenge us today. The author, Andrew Davies, goes so far as to suggest, though not with a completely straight face, that “now that progressive scholars” have mortally struck the Goliath of “grammatico-historical criticism,” Pentecostal Davids should finish the job by cutting off Goliath’s head.” Davies, Andrew. “What Does It Mean to Read the Bible as a Pentecostal?” in *Pentecostal Hermeneutics: A Reader*. Edited by Lee Roy Martin. Leiden: Brill, 2013, 249–62. Quoted in Keener, *Spirit Hermeneutics: Reading Scripture in Light of Pentecost*, 125.

## Inspiration Is Not Magic

Digging even more deeply into the need to understand authorial inspiration we note that some preachers in Nigeria hold what may be considered a very high view of inspiration, but which is unbiblical. This view ascribes a mystical character to the Bible.<sup>85</sup> In the mystical view of inspiration, short pericopes or verses are endowed with spiritual properties that cause them to be misconstrued as God's truth even when dissected from their place in Scripture. The thought goes, it seems, that because each word in the Bible is inspired, verses and paragraphs can stand on their own without regard to their place in the fuller literary, rhetorical, and redemptive historical context.<sup>86</sup> In this way of (mis)understanding a text, a preacher believes it is biblical to interpret chapters and even verses without considering why God inspired that author to write.<sup>87</sup>

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85. In the seminar I led in Nigeria, a good number of the preachers carried Bibles in their pockets at all times, however they admitted to not regularly reading them. The Bibles seemed to be good-luck charms rather than inspired words to be studied. In fact, most present said they had never been encouraged to do regular or complete readings of the Bible. This is not necessarily representative of all believers in Nigeria, but it was an important observation and cause for discussion among those who came to our training.

86. This textual view of inspiration is popular and may be the result of misunderstanding theologians like B. B. Warfield, who wrote, "What this church-doctrine [inspiration] is, it is scarcely necessary minutely to describe. It will suffice to remind ourselves that it looks upon the Bible as an oracular book,—as the Word of God in such a sense that whatever it says God says,—not a book, then, in which one may, by searching, find some word of God, but a book which may be frankly appealed to at any point with the assurance that whatever it may be found to say, that is the Word of God." But what I believe Warfield's intent is here, was to say that we are comforted and encouraged and hear a word from God as we hear memorized Bible verses and short encouraging readings on the sickbed. They bring to mind the fuller context. I do not believe his intent is to say that short biblical texts can be interpreted for preaching without carefully considering their full context and the original author's intent. See Warfield, *The Works of Benjamin B. Warfield: Revelation and Inspiration*, vol. 1, 52, 75ff.

87. This view does not limit the biblical authors to be heard to say only of what they originally purposed in their historical setting, as some say. But it also does not allow biblical texts to be used to support teaching that goes beyond what the authors clearly intended for their text as written in their context; that is except where the canonical Scriptures in total, the whole of the Bible written by all of the inspired authors, might on occasion mediate, develop, or further expand upon that truth. In other words, the view as taught to lay preachers in Nigeria is that the Bible is inspired in its entirety by God just as each individual book's author (or as an in the case of Psalms more than one author) was inspired to write their text for purposes in their day.

Unfortunately, it is a common misunderstanding that Scripture passages and verses, taken out of context, can still convey the truth of God because they were inspired. Many have been misled to believe that literally every word of the Bible conveys the Word of God based on what I call the “magical” view of inspiration. This sort of talk is where the trouble starts for many preachers serious about upholding Scripture who yet appeal to meaning from portions of texts outside of their complete written contextual meaning.<sup>88</sup> This view of inspiration essentially gives the preacher the same authority as the biblical author. In reality, a sermon built on a single verse or even paragraph, taken out of context, has no more authority than an encouraging greeting card.

Marius Nel, who researches African Pentecostalism and neo-pentecostalism, wrote in his book on the prosperity gospel that non-contextual, inspired-text views of inspiration have unfortunately led formerly solid African Pentecostal churches into teaching prosperity gospel views because their understanding of inspiration extends beyond a text in context to words and verses and partial texts.<sup>89</sup> Nel writes,

The anti-intellectualist urge is still characterizing the African pentecostal scene to a certain extent, including the contemporary prosperity movement within independent network Christianity. Although their leaders are in many cases well-qualified, most of them still use a biblicist and literalist hermeneutic to interpret the Bible, characterized by a conservative theological stance that the Bible is the infallible and flawless word of God, a conception that views each word in the Bible on the same level, as a revelation of God self. It can also be called the proof-text method of interpreting the Bible; typically, the reader needs a biblical meaning for a real-life purpose, and goes in search for some scriptural texts that support the topical theme, ignoring the context in which the text occurs and the world in which it initially functioned.[1] The scriptural texts are valued

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88. This context is at least the full book and the whole canon of Scripture.

89. Nel is a prolific writer and the Research Chair in Ecumenism: Pentecostalism and Neo-Pentecostalism for the Unit for Reformational Theology and Development for the South African Society at North-West University in South Africa.

more for their short, epigrammatic style of several key words that coincide with the topic or subject chosen than for the evidence that they actually bring from their own context.[2] This is a populist interpretation that string[s] proof-texts together, reading predetermined beliefs into the Bible.[3] Their conservativeness is demonstrated by the nearly exclusive use of the King James translation (1611), with its unworldly use of the English language.<sup>90</sup>

Bible texts and even certain words of Scripture do hold power in a sense when used to bring to mind the larger meaning of a biblical author, but when taken outside their authorial context and intent, they can be easily given new nonbiblical meanings.<sup>91</sup> But Hank Hanegraaff, a biblical scholar who critiques cults and religious movements, strongly warns, “A primary characteristic of cults in general is the practice of taking biblical texts out of context in order to develop pretexts for their theological perversions. In addition, cults have virtually made an art

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90. Nel writes, “The historical-critical objection to proof-texting is its assumption that the Bible is equally inspired throughout. However, just as important is that popular users of proof-texting do not give attention to the texts’ contexts. Proof-texting assumes that the Bible is equally inspired throughout and timeless in its teaching; any verse of Scripture could be used without distinction as a proof to support a doctrinal position.” Nel, *The Prosperity Gospel in Africa*, 154.

The bracketed numbers indicate footnoted citations in Nel’s original work. [1] Hank Hanegraaff, *Christianity In Crisis: The 21st Century* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2009), 9. [2] Kaiser, “The Meaning of Meaning,” in *Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics: The Search for Meaning*, 33. [3] Deji Ayegboyin, “A Rethinking of Prosperity Teaching in the New Pentecostal Churches in Nigeria,” *Black Theology* 4, no. 1 (2006): 82, accessed October 8, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.1558/blth.2006.4.1.70>, who quotes Kenneth Archer, *A Pentecostal Hermeneutic: Spirit, Scripture and Community* (Cleveland, OH: CPT, 2009), 64.

91. In Nigeria and in the prosperity gospel, the building of theologies based on proof-texts that ignore authorial and canonical intent have hurt many. Prosperity preachers often talk about “seed faith” and point to Luke 6:38 to suggest that giving to the church will make one wealthy. “Give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you” (Luke 6:38).

Sampson N. Nwaomah has done a study of the book of Luke to demonstrate the way proof-texting has caused texts to be misconstrued. He shows that “while Luke 6:38 may suggest that God rewards acts of kindness, it might hurt one’s faith to focus on rewards as a motive for generosity or service. [Luke] further argues that rather than craving for abundance, Luke suggests caution because of the dangers wealth could pose on faith and human relationships.” Nwaomah points to the contrasting message of Luke 1:53; 5:11, 27-28; 6:24-25, 30, 38; 8:14; 9:3, 23-25; 12:15, 13-30; 14:7-14; 16:13-15, 23; 18:22-25; 19:1-9. See Sampson M. Nwaomah, “Prosperity Gospel in the Context of Jesus’ Teachings on Wealth in the Gospel of Luke,” *Asia-Africa Journal of Mission & Ministry* 10 (2014), <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/283497274>. Clearly, Luke 6:38 is correctly understood only if read in light of Luke’s bigger message concerning service, salvation, and wealth. For this reason, statements like his are problematic for preaching.

form out of using Christian terminology, all the while pouring their own meanings into the words.”<sup>92</sup>

In the inspired “text only” perspective, preachers may misinterpret a part of a story or a paragraph or even a phrase by reading it out of its context, thinking that is able to stand on its own because the text is inspired.<sup>93</sup> They take these parts of a book to carry meaning based on the literal (but limited context) sense, depending for their interpretations on “verbal inspiration” of the text, despite their interpretation being unconnected to the author’s original

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92. In a note of humor, Nel quotes Hanegraaff in a footnote: “It cannot be used as an argument to state that all groups that are guilty of such hermeneutical practices are cults; then an inordinate number of Christian groups and pastors would qualify to form a part of this definition.” Hanegraaff, *Christianity In Crisis: The 21st Century*, 33.

93. Even sequential pericopal preaching which does not take into account the full intent and purpose of a book can misrepresent the author and confuse a preacher, or at least their congregation, who may not understand the text’s true meaning at all. Preachers pay only lip service to authorial intent when they fail to take the time to comprehend fully the author’s intent and canonical purpose from the outside in (consider canon, then whole book, then passage).

Abraham Kuruvilla supports something he calls “pericopal theology,” meaning preaching the theology of each pericope of a book as it grows pericope by pericope. Though this is a viable alternative, it works only if the preacher exegetes the whole book first and then continually refers to the text up to that point and even the text that follows, at least in his or her message preparation. The problem I have observed in preachers who use pericopal theology is that they take on the authority of chopping an author’s book into manageable bits to preach on without regard to the author’s big picture or paying merely lip service to the intent and dispensing with it within a few sermons. They do not always build on past pericopes in order to best represent the author’s purposes, but chop books into disjointed chunks that they can preach on, idea by idea. With multi-staff/preacher churches or churches with untrained preachers who do not have a deep understanding of the book’s purposes, they essentially can end up preaching out of context.

The view of this thesis, by contrast, is to emphasize full-book context and the canon’s purposes where each sermon ultimately supports the fuller a(A)uthorial intent and purpose. This is highly important, particularly with Old Testament narrative, Paul’s writing, the book of Job, and the prophets. In these books, expository intent preaching requires that a passage is properly preached only after studying how that passage fit into its place in the whole. Pericopal theology is like describing the individual pieces of a puzzle one at a time without understanding how the puzzle piece fits into the picture that is being created. It is like teaching about a mystery novel when you don’t know how it ends. We can end up teaching salvation without mentioning sin, or grace without justice, or some other misapprehension of the Spirit’s intent. To me, “pericopal theology” makes it too easy to misconstrue the author’s meaning in any one sermon. See Abraham Kuruvilla, “Pericopal Theology: An Intermediary Between Text and Application,” *Trinity Journal* 31, NS (2010): 265-83.

purposes for writing.<sup>94</sup> As we have noted, “verbal inspiration” does not mean that every word or group of words in the Bible can stand alone to carry God’s divine intention. The inspired rhetorical and canonical context is key to understanding the reasons and purposes for the Bible to have been completely and word-for-word inspired.

A dual a(A)uthorial intention view of inspiration necessitates that, for the preacher who stands in the pulpit to speak for God (the divine Author), an initial understanding of the reasons and purposes God’s Spirit caused the writing (earthly authorial intent) to occur should be sought in order to lead us to the Divine intention, which is the purpose to be preached. In other words, an understanding of the inspired author’s intent for his book should be pursued from both careful (natural) and prayerful (supernatural) reading of passages as part of the whole book and the canon. I am not suggesting that for a sermon, the preacher needs to study in depth the exact historical, political, geological, and cultural situations occurring at the time of writing, but rather that the preacher must seek and consider the information that the Spirit and the author felt were necessary for him or her to know and so included in the book being preaching on and in the rest of the canon. Sometimes, more information is helpful, and scholars who have studied God’s Word and written on it can be a wonderful resource.

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94. It is because of the view that this textual inspired individual “word” view is often considered “literal” interpretation that I prefer to teach preachers to consider the text “at face value,” which means to read a text completely as you would to understand any other important text, as though the author was making meaning through their words rather than that their words can be pulled out of context. Though perhaps “literal” would be a better word, it seems to have come to mean the opposite of what “literal” actually means.

Kaiser discusses his view and calls the dual a(A)uthorial intent the “syntactical-theological model.” More recently this view has been called theological interpretation by Vanhoozer and a host of others. The point being made is that it is not the grammar or even the text but the authorial and especially Divine intent, the “theology,” if you will, being expressed that is key. See Kaiser, “The Meaning of Meaning,” in *Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics: The Search for Meaning*, 34-35.

Preaching done without first understanding the author's purposes within their inspired literary rhetorical framework and as part of God's great redemptive history is not truly biblical.<sup>95</sup> Textual interpretation without regard to authorial intent and canonical redemptive purpose has been used to prove that the Bible itself supports the materialist prosperity gospel, to misunderstand biblical promises, to support slavery, racism, misogyny, and many political positions that the authors of the Bible and the Holy Spirit would frankly be surprised to find they are being used to support.<sup>96</sup> It is for this reason that dual a(A)uthorial intent is so important to teach all preachers.

The doctrine of verbal plenary inspiration does not mean the Bible has magical properties but that the entire Bible, each word together in context, is meant to convey God's

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95. When a "mystical" view of plenary verbal textual inspiration of contextless text is coupled with the doctrine of inerrancy, the preacher's perspective (whether right or wrong) is seen as unassailable and equivalent to God's view, though in fact the preacher's understanding of a passage may be completely outside of the original inspired author's view, which means outside of God's view. This is particularly dangerous in geographical contexts such as Nigeria where the pastor's view is beyond questioning.

We see an example of where this can be problematic when people preach from the book of Ephesians where the author Paul carefully teaches on Christian unity, humility, holiness, and love, culminating in the practical application of humility among believers, family members, and servants (Eph 5:22–6:9). Paul follows this by explaining how we can accomplish this superhuman task of humility. He commends the Spirit empowerment (Eph 6:10-20).

Without considering Paul's full intent for the church and the people of God, sermons are sometimes based on the short text, "Wives submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord." When this message ignores the preceding commendations of mutual submission (of all genders of believers) for one another out of reverence for Christ (Eph 5:21) and the commendation to husbands to love wives like Christ loved the church, Paul's message, and thus God's purposes, are turned inside out and the opposite meaning is preached.

Paul's message is humility in the body of Christ; one application includes wifely humility toward her husband at home. But without considering Paul's major purposes for his letter to the Ephesians, which he clearly and repeatedly states throughout his book, we miss the context, the motive, the mutuality of the teaching, and the spiritual empowerment to accomplish such a daunting task (Eph 6). We are left with a half-baked proposition that runs counter to the very essence of what Paul was writing.

In churches with a leader who considers themselves to be in the apostolic line, such as many in the prosperity gospel and neo-charismatic churches do, this can be a dangerous idea whereby the pastor's view on a passage is the "gospel truth," regardless of the view of the original author or even God's view.

96. See Wright, *Scripture and the Authority of God*, 77-78.

divine message to us. It does not allow ignoring the original authors but only indicates that God is speaking through them. John Frame continues that “verbal inspiration” means that the words of Scripture are God’s words, his communication to us.<sup>97</sup> Thus “plenary verbal inspiration” means that all of the Bible is God’s speech, his communication to us given through prophets and apostles in times other than our own but in situations that may be related to ours.

In this view of inspiration, then, God is ultimately communicating through writers to us. Jeannine Brown, associate professor of New Testament and associate academic dean at Bethel Seminary, explains that Scripture is, at heart, God’s communication:

If we view the Bible as a communicative act and not simply an autonomous text disengaged from its author, we are ethically bound to grant the author the privileges due more routinely to all communicators. This means respecting the author’s communication through the text as a voice distinct from our own—what we have referred to as “the other.” In this ethical stance, “the reader is responsible for [his or] her response to the other and the other’s act.” [1] An ethic of respect is a difficult one to consistently carry out. We are often tempted to conform the “other” to our own ways of being. Yet the moral imperative, in the midst of this temptation, is to hear Scripture in a way that allows God, through its witness, to examine and shape us, so that we become conformed to the “other.” “For those he foreknew, he also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son.”<sup>98</sup>

God then, we affirm, is speaking through His Word and so ultimately it is God’s intents and purposes that we will seek through what he has vicariously written. This goal then is to find the dual a(A)uthorial intent.

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97. Frame, *The Doctrine of the Word of God*, 143.

98. The bracketed number indicates footnoted citations in Brown’s original work. [1] Kevin Vanhoozer, *First Theology: God, Scripture and Hermeneutics* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2002), 177. Jeannine K. Brown, *Scripture as Communication: Introducing Biblical Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 127.

## Dual a(A)uthorial Intent Is Canonical and Redemptive

The importance of appreciating the dual a(A)uthorial intent grows directly from the view that God inspired human authors to speak for him in their culturally and historically bounded situations with the ultimate intent of speaking to all people in all situations. A dual a(A)uthorship view of inspiration sees the Bible, as we have been discussing thus far, as both fully human and as fully divine. So, for teaching preaching, the dual a(A)uthorial intent is understood to be God's ultimate intent for his Divine Word as displayed in smaller portions of Scripture (yet in their full book context). Dual a(A)uthorial intent is not two intents but God's fullest intent for his words. A belief in the doctrine of inspiration of Scripture signifies that ultimately, the expository preacher's hermeneutical goal is to determine God's intent, what he is communicating in a passage of Scripture which is a part of the whole, inspired, plenary Bible. The whole Bible, God's Word written, is the full context of an expository sermon.<sup>99</sup>

Dual a(A)uthorial intent is sometimes misunderstood to mean application, significance, or spiritual revelation rather than God's will for a passage. But this is not what I mean. When I use dual a(A)uthorial intent, I mean God's larger purposes that are not rooted in either the

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99. Nicholas Wolterstorff writes on "authorial-discourse" interpretation for Scripture. But Wolterstorff's ideas are both similar and yet very different from our project here. In other words, Wolterstorff's concept of "double-agency discourse" sounds a lot like dual a(A)uthorial intent. But Wolterstorff is not concerned with intent, but rather with the discourse or communication itself. He observes that a person can perform an illocutionary act by means of another person performing a locutionary or illocutionary act. His examples of double-agency discourse are someone deputizing another person or someone appropriating the discourse of another, for instance, by citing them in agreement. Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse: Philosophical Reflections on the Claim that God Speaks*, Location 907-1096. Essentially Wolterstorff is trying to argue that the one can hear from God in the Bible but stops far short of believing the Bible is actually the inspired Word of God as we claim here. Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse: Philosophical Reflections on the Claim that God Speaks*. For a better discussion see Williamson, *Catholic Principles for Interpreting Scripture: A Study of the Pontifical Biblical Commission's The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church*, vol. 22, 186.

biblical or modern culture but in God's ultimate supra-cultural purposes, in his eternal essence and redemptive love. They can reputedly be determined only by a believer who is listening, under the power of the Holy Spirit, for God's voice in each passage as it fits within the whole of Scripture.

This dual a(A)uthorial intent is ultimately what the preacher seeks to understand, apply, and preach. The preacher exposit a passage during a sermon as a demonstration of the ultimate purpose of God displayed in a biblical time and place. Each passage is a mere glimpse of the total picture of the full dual a(A)uthorial intent.

Vanhoozer puts it like this: "As divinely inspired, Scripture has a unified deeper meaning as well as a 'surface' meaning."<sup>100</sup> Later he clarifies:

The canon is a complete and completed communicative act, structured by a divine authorial intention. *The divine intention does not contravene the intention of the human author but rather supervenes on it.* In the same way, the canon does not change or contradict the meaning of Isaiah 53 but supervenes on it and specifies its referent. In speaking of the Suffering Servant, Isaiah was referring to Christ (viz., God's gracious provision for Israel and the world).<sup>101</sup>

Brevard Childs was an American Old Testament scholar and professor of Old Testament at Yale University from 1958 until 1999. He is considered one of the most influential biblical scholars of the twentieth century because he went against the liberal tide by proposing that the canonization of the Old and New Testaments into our Bibles was the vehicle of Christ's body, the church, universally acknowledging that God is the source of its truth and that human writers were divinely inspired by God's Spirit to bear a truthful witness. Childs wrote, "Thus the

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100. Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?*, 114.

101. Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?*, 265.

post-apostolic church strove correctly to acknowledge as authoritative those writings that were from God. Although historically the decision of the church actively shaped the canon, the church itself envisioned its task as one of acknowledging what God had given as a gracious gift in Christ for the nourishing of the continuing life of faith.”<sup>102</sup>

Childs clarifies that the full goal of hermeneutics “is to understand the various voices [the authors] within the whole Christian Bible, New and Old Testament alike, as a witness to the one Lord Jesus Christ, the selfsame divine reality.”<sup>103</sup> “The Old Testament bears testimony to the Christ who has not yet come; the New to the Christ who has appeared in the fulness of time.”<sup>104</sup>

Paul Noble, a lecturer in biblical studies at Suffolk College, England, offered a critical reconstruction of Childs which fits well with our view here. He sees the canon as a library of works by a single Author:

This (divine) author wrote them (over a considerable period of time) by assuming a variety of authorial *personae*, each with its own distinctive character, historical situation, etc. As one moves, therefore, from one book to another one encounters a diversity of ‘implied authors’, each of whom must be understood on their own terms; yet behind them all is a single controlling intelligence, working to an overall plan. Because of this, these diverse works therefore can—and for a full understanding, must—be read as a unified canon. The point of this model is to suggest that there are significant parallels between the exegetical problems posed by a divine-human biblical canon and those which we already know how to handle in a secular context (e.g., in

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102. Childs, *Biblical Theology: A Proposal*, 31. For a fuller discussion on the loss of authorial intent and canon see Chapter Five.

103. Paul R. Noble has published several articles on biblical methodology and literary theory, and on the interpretation of Amos. Noble offered a critical reconstruction of Childs’s hermeneutic, by clarifying that “only divine authorship could account for the meaning that Childs wishes to find in the Bible.” Noble proposed a formal model by which the divine and human intentionality could be related in the canon in *Paul R. Noble, The Canonical Approach: A Critical Reconstruction of the Hermeneutics of Brevard S. Childs* (Netherlands: Brill, 2021), 206.

104. Brevard S. Childs, *Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments: Theological Reflection on the Christian Bible*, 1st Fortress Press ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 85.

taking account of the respective roles of the implied author and real author in interpreting a modern novel).<sup>105</sup>

Peter Adam reminds us that because the Bible is inspired, we can hear God in every passage, but all with God's ultimate message:

Although we recognize God's working through different authors at different times and at different places, so that Scripture often speaks in a varied voice, nevertheless we should be looking for coherence and unity that are produced by the mind of the primary author God. Because the Bible is God's words, we should also expect to find that the words of God are useful and have contemporary power to bring salvation to us, to change us, and to transform us.<sup>106</sup>

So, in the same way that I have been recommending we teach preachers to find an author's intent by looking at a pericope's place in that author's whole book, the key to finding God's intent, the dual a(A)uthorial intent for his Word, is to study an original inspired author's intent as a subject within the context of the whole library that is the Bible.<sup>107</sup>

### **Committing to the Doctrine of Inspiration**

We have gone into much depth regarding the hermeneutical implications of a commitment to and firm belief in the doctrine of inspiration. We have noted that inspiration does not merely apply to texts but requires us to consider the inspired authors and their

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105. Noble, *The Canonical Approach*, 341.

106. Adam, *Speaking God's Words*, 105.

107. Vanhoozer forcefully maintains the link between authorial intention and canonical meaning. "The 'fuller meaning' of Scripture—the meaning associated with divine authorship—emerges only at the level of the whole canon. . . . If we are reading the Bible as the Word of God, therefore, I suggest that the context that yields this maximal sense is the canon, taken as a unified communicative act. The books of Scripture, taken individually, may anticipate the whole, but the canon alone is its instantiation." Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?*, 265. See also Kevin Storer, *Reading Scripture to Hear God: Kevin Vanhoozer and Henri de Lubac on God's Use of Scripture in the Economy of Redemption* (Cambridge, UK: Lutterworth Press, 2015).

purposes because they are God's intents and purposes. We have shown the importance of this commitment to the doctrine of inspiration means that Nigerian preachers must be strongly encouraged to read whole Bible books and look for meaning to trickle down from the author's purposes for writing the whole book down to the author's intentions for a shorter passage. We were reminded that biblically, contemporary spiritual revelations and prophecy must always acquiesce to the original author's meaning, because the Holy Spirit's inspiration was only for the original author, not for subsequent readers. We were put on notice that the Bible, though inspired, is still a text and must be understood as such. Finally, we noted that inspiration applies to the whole Bible, the canon which is ultimately redemptive in purpose, both for salvation and sanctification.

Because of the rapid growth of Christianity in Nigeria and the high percentage of theologically untrained pastors, many of whom hold neo-charismatic or syncretistic beliefs, encouraging comprehensive reading and contextual Bible study that concurrently listens for the voice of God in the passage under the power of the Holy Spirit as the original author's purposes are discerned will be beneficial for teaching preachers.<sup>108</sup> Further, since the perversions of Christianity in Africa such as the prosperity gospel and syncretism are connected to the influence of American prosperity preachers on television and in the media as well as the strong background of the African worldview and traditional religion it seems only right that Americans

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108. "The independent neo-Pentecostal or neo-charismatic churches responsible for preaching the prosperity message are expanding in Africa faster even than Islam, at twice the rate of the Roman Catholic Church, and at three times that of the other non-Catholic religious traditions, even considerably stemming the growth of the African Instituted Churches in West Africa." Nel, *The Prosperity Gospel in Africa*, Introduction.

should be involved in offering Nigerian preachers a way to preach with biblical soundness, firmly entrenched in the Bible read within their own context.<sup>109</sup>

Further, because of the spiritual emphasis on listening for God's intents as well as the author's, I believe this hermeneutic fits well in the Nigerian and African context.<sup>110</sup> Nigerian leaders, like Emmanuel and Grace Muhammed of Hebron Home Nigeria, believe this type teaching is a good way to mend the unbiblical theology (which we will look more carefully at in Chapter Four) that has proliferated in Nigeria and the many countries it influences around the world.<sup>111</sup>

In Chapter Three, we will consider the ramifications of authorial inspiration and dual a(A)uthorial intent interpretation, namely, that expository preachers are God's ambassadors to convey God's redemptive purposes.

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109. Nel, *The Prosperity Gospel in Africa*, Motivation for Study.

110. Mburu notes, "The African understanding of the Supreme Being and other spiritual entities has many similarities with the biblical understanding. It provides a common point of reference since our spiritual orientation makes it easy for us to understand spiritual realities." Mburu, *African Hermeneutics*, 19, 39.

111. Gary Maxey explains the importance of Nigeria to the rest of Africa, "Today Nigeria occupies a front-row seat in the arena of global Christianity. Our rise to that position has been predicted, heralded and discussed for more than forty years. We are unquestionably on the cutting edge of global Christian growth. It is estimated that by the middle of this century, the number of professing Christians in Africa will be around 600 to 700 million; that will be 38 percent of all Christians globally." Maxey, *The Seduction of the Nigerian Church*, Location 9537; 772.

## CHAPTER THREE

### THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION:

#### PREACHING AS AMBASSADORSHIP, SPEAKING GOD'S WORD

As stated in Chapter One, this Thesis-Project proposed that teaching preachers in Nigeria to do context-based, in-depth inductive Bible study that is canonically grounded can help them to understand both the biblical author's intents and God's universal purposes for a passage for preaching. The hope is that this kind of exegesis can prevent the unbiblical theologies that may be associated with the prosperity gospel, African traditional religion in preaching, and other rapidly growing church movements. We have discussed in Chapter Two how this process, based in the doctrine of authorial inspiration, can improve a preacher's ability to speak on behalf of God and his authors, thereby enabling congregations to hear from God in his Word. This can lead to preaching biblical, contextual, redemptive, theologically accurate, expository, and ambassadorial sermons in places like Nigeria.

This chapter contains a survey of New Testament Scripture on the topic of preaching as ambassadorial proclamation followed by a discussion of the role of the preacher as one who speaks for God. This chapter supports the idea that a preacher's ultimate role is to be the mouthpiece of God as he can be understood through the writings of the authors he inspired. In this way I hope to encourage preachers in Nigeria, to consider the seriousness of their responsibility to read and study carefully in order to hear from both the inspired author in their text and the divine Author through what he has revealed in the fullness of his Word.

Preachers speak for God on the basis of the Word of God as servants of God. There is a need for a change in aspiration and attitude for some preachers in Nigeria, those for example, whose understanding is that they should desire the roles of New Testament apostles and Old Testament prophets including the authority to go beyond what is written in Scripture. This chapter makes the point that preachers do not speak on their own authority but preach as God's mouthpiece from Scripture. The Bible, not theology learned from the American prosperity gospel preachers or those in the growing apostolic church movements, should be their guide.<sup>1</sup>

The key passage for both this chapter and the next is 2 Corinthians 5:17-20a:

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us.

In consideration of this passage, Chapter Four will consider the ultimate purpose of God, which is to be reconciled to his people through the redemption he made available by way of the sacrifice of his only son (Eph 2:1-10). I will discuss in more detail there how the problems in Chapter One may be related to some aspects of African traditional religion's effect on Nigerian culture as well as on the confusion brought by prosperity preachers regarding the results and responsibilities of our reconciliation with God and especially the meaning of Christ's atonement. This chapter will focus on preacher's as God's ambassadors.

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1. For more on this, see the Gift of Apostleship and the Gift of Prophecy below. In Chapter Four, we will note that the idea of apostles and prophets with "revelation knowledge" make unbiblical claims of authority.

## **We Are Ambassadors for Christ: Roles and Spiritual Gifts**

Believers who are called by God to preach, in fact all believers, are invited to be God's representatives, his envoys to the world (Mal 2:7; Eph 6:20), bringing the message of Christ's work, by which he made a way for us to be reconciled to himself (Rom 5:11), and showing us how to live in light of that. In light of this call to a role of ambassador for all believers, in grateful response to Christ's reconciling us to himself, and through the power of the Holy Spirit, preachers are obligated and empowered to proclaim God's offer of relationship and its results (Luke 8:8; John 14:10, 15-17, 23; Acts 20:28-30; Eph 4:11-16; 1 Cor 4:1-2; 9:16-19; 12:5-6, 8-11; Phil 1:15; 2 Tim 4:1-3; Titus 2:11-15; John 21:15-17). As part of this charge, preachers share with their congregations how we should live in light of the atonement, our obligation to obedience (Acts 15:9; 26:18; Rom 1:17; 3:25, 28, 30; 4:13-16; 5:1-2; 9:30; 11:20; 2 Cor 5:7; Gal 2:16-20; 3:8-14, 22; Phil 3:9), and what it looks like to be reconciled to God and become new creations (2 Cor 5:17; Gal 6:15).

Being God's ambassador is the basic title and the incredible privilege of the preacher who may stand in God's stead in the pulpit bringing Scripture's message of reconciliation (Rom 5:10-11; 2 Cor 5:17-21; Eph 2:11-22; Col 1:15-23). God wants to make his personal appeal to the world through us, his representatives on earth. It is because God wills to be in relationship with his people that he inspired the writing of the Bible, the stories of God's mighty acts, including humankind's depravity, the law which points out our sinfulness, and the prophets and the New Testament which point the way back (Ps 119:105; Prov 6:23; John 5:39; Rom 15:4; 1 Cor 10:6-13; 1 Tim 4:6; 2 Tim 3:14-17; James 2:8-12; 2 Pet 1:21). It is to bring about this abiding relationship that he left us the Holy Spirit (John 16:12-15). He entrusts all his children, and

especially his preachers, to be his mouthpieces to the world, giving us the job of making his message personal, relatable, and winning to others (Acts 17:22-31; Acts 8:4, 25; 10:24-48; 1 Cor 1:17; 2 Cor 3:1-6; Eph 3:7-12; 2 Tim 4:2).<sup>2</sup>

### Roles and the Spirit's Gifts for the Ambassador of Christ

Ambassador is the role of the believer and the underlying basis for the role for the preacher. John Stott, in *The Preacher's Portrait*, tells the story of the congratulatory words of one preacher to another many years ago: "'I most sincerely congratulate you,' wrote Charles Simeon to John Venn on the occasion of his ordination in 1782, 'not on a permission to receive 40 or 50 pounds a year, nor on the title of Reverend, but on your accession to the most valuable, most honorable, most important, and most glorious office in the world—to that of an ambassador of the Lord Jesus Christ.'"<sup>3</sup>

In our key passage (2 Cor 5:17-20a), Paul spoke of God making his appeal through us so that all would be reconciled to him. But, when Paul calls himself an “ambassador in chains” in Ephesians 6:19-20, he is not holding a position of any worldly respect. Instead, he is in shackles

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2. In this chapter I bring reconciliation and redemption together due to the close relationship between the two doctrines. Because the acceptance of redemption brings reconciliation with God and God's peace brings to end our hostilities with ourselves, he redeems our broken lives, which means we can be reconciled to him, ourselves, and others.

3. William Carus, *Memoirs of the Life of the Rev. Charles Simeon* (London: Hatchard, 1847), 28. in John R. W. Stott, *The Preacher's Portrait: Some New Testament Word Studies* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1988), Location 364-67.

probably in Rome.<sup>4</sup> One can assume he really felt like a foreign ambassador imprisoned as he was, against his will in that pagan place. Yet despite his troubles, he continued to speak up, and asked for prayer to boldly make known the mystery of the gospel. Ephesians 6:19-20 demonstrates the ethos of the ambassador preacher.

The word Paul used for “performing the role of an ambassador” was πρεσβεύω (*presbeuō*) (2 Cor 5:20; Eph 6:20).<sup>5</sup> A *πρεσβευτής* in Paul’s time, in secular life, was an official or person of great dignity who worked or traveled as an envoy for someone else.<sup>6</sup> In the New Testament, the *presbeuō* ambassador was an appointed representative and was afforded a special sense of honor and authority.<sup>7</sup> The role of a *presbeuō* ambassador was much more than, say, a traveling sales representative; he or she had authority as would an eldest son, the son who represents the family on important business matters (see the story of the tenants of the vineyard in Luke 20:9ff.) or the appointed emissary representing a king on a mission to a foreign land.

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4. “[Pray] also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak” (Eph 6:19-20).

5 The *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament* informs us that “in Eph 6:20, πρεσβεύω occurs in a request for prayer for [Paul] the ambassador of the gospel who lies in chains (similarly Col 4:2-4). But in 2 Cor 5:20 ‘Paul’ does not say he is speaking on behalf of the exalted Christ, but rather bearing witness to the gospel. That is to say, ὑπὲρ οὗ πρεσβεύω is not to be translated ‘on behalf of whom . . .,’ but ‘for whom I perform ambassadorship.’” So in Ephesians, Paul is acting as an ambassadorship for the message of the gospel whereas in 2 Corinthians he is acting as ambassador for Christ. *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, s.v. “πρεσβεύω.”

6 The πρεσβεύω refers to elder, not so much an older person but a person of venerability. The early church ordained and sent elders to the Gentile churches, as we see in Acts 14:23. Acts 20:18ff demonstrates that these elders were to be overseers and pastors, inheritors of the legacy of the apostles in teaching and protecting the early church from error. In Acts 20:28 Paul designates them also as *episkopos*, overseers or bishops. *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Abridged in One Volume*, s.v. “πρεσβεύω.”

7 See, for example, the ends of Paul’s letter and John’s epistles where they commend and thank some elders.

When Paul uses this word *presbeuo* in 2 Corinthians 5:20, our key passage, he is referring to his ministry itself as a type of embassy, in other words, his ministry was the main source of contact between two disparate kingdoms.<sup>8</sup> The *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* further clarifies *presbeuo*: “This is not just a passing on of the news but part of the total act (v. 19; cf. 6:1). Through the mouth of the ambassador Christ or God himself speaks. The word of reconciliation presents the completed act as a summons or invitation to its appropriation in faith. The focus here is on the authority of the message rather than that on the one who conveys it.”<sup>9</sup>

When Paul asked the believers in Ephesus to pray for him to proclaim the mystery of the gospel and speak boldly (Eph 6:19-20) he was speaking of both his evangelistic and doctrinal preaching. At least this is how the believers in Ephesus would have understood his message since they had sat under his teaching initially and then daily for more than two years (Acts 19:8-10). Clearly, Paul’s ambassadorial teaching for two years in the hall of Tyrannus declared more about the mysteries of the good news and the doctrines of Christianity than we might see in a simple evangelistic message. Thus, ambassadorial preaching is not limited to evangelism; its goal is commending a life lived in relationship with God.

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8. *Theological Dictionary, Abridged* s.v. “πρεσβεύω.”

9. *Theological Dictionary, Abridged* s.v. “πρεσβεύω.”

## Ambassador Preachers

The language of the New Testament texts reinforces this idea that preaching is essentially an ambassadorial task. Paul, for example, compares his preaching with the pronouncements of a royal herald or κήρυξ (*kéryx*). He in fact calls himself a herald, an apostle, and a teacher for the purpose of bringing all people to himself and to the knowledge of truth (1 Tim 2:1-7; 2 Tim 1:8-12). In Greek antiquity, a *keryx* was a type of ambassador appointed to make public declarations, announce royal decrees, and bring vital news on behalf of the king to all parts of the kingdom.<sup>10</sup> It is not surprising then that in the earliest Christian writings, the word for the content of preaching was *κήρυγμα* (*kērygma*), the same as the word for the ambassadorial proclamation of the royal herald (Matt 12:41; Luke 11:32; Rom 16:25; 1 Cor 1:21; 15:14; 2 Tim 4:17; Titus 1:1-3).<sup>11</sup> Heralds announced the *kerygma* to the community as the prophet Jonah once did (Matt 12:41; Luke 11:32; Septuagint Jonah 3:2).<sup>12</sup>

Following on that, the related verb *κηρύσσω* (*kēryssō*) literally meant to discharge the herald's office, to announce, to cry out, to spread a story widely, to proclaim.<sup>13</sup> In the Bible, it is

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10. Κήρυξ, an official entrusted with a proclamation who would have carried a scepter, been considered as wise, and could be called on to be the king's representatives in matters small and great, including running errands as needed. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, s.v. "κήρυξ,." *Tyndale Bible Dictionary*, s.v. "κήρυξ,."; *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* s.v. "Κήρυξ."

11. Κήρυγμα, "1) The content of a herald's proclamation, a call to assemble, call together by a proclamation B 12:6. 2) a public declaration, something proclaimed aloud, proclamation by a herald sent by God." *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, s.v. "κήρυγμα."

Robert Mounce says that kerygma originally began as a proclamation of the death, resurrection, and exaltation of Jesus. Robert H. Mounce, *The Essential Nature of New Testament Preaching* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 1960), 134.

12. *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*, s.v. "Κήρυγμα."

13. κηρύσσω or its cognates are used seventy-four times in the New Testament. Most of those uses are for preaching or proclamation of the gospel.

this word *kerysso* that is most often translated “preach” (Rom 10:8-10, 14; 1 Pet 3:18-20). For example, “Then he [the resurrected Christ] opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and said to them, ‘Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed [*kerysso*] in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.’ You are witnesses of these things” (Luke 24:45-48).

It may also be noted that a herald had authority from the king to summon the *ἐκκλησία* (*ekklēsia*) or community together. Paul later used this same word, *ekklesia*, for the church of Jesus Christ, which is to whom the proclamation primarily went.<sup>14</sup>

### Ambassador Evangelists

In the Gospels, Matthew and especially Luke claimed the word previously used for a herald’s message of good news (1 Kgs 1:32) or *εὐαγγέλιον* (*euangelion*) for the good news of the kingdom of God (Matt 4:23; 9:35; Luke 4:43; 8:1; 16:16; Acts 8:12).<sup>15</sup> The word *euangelion* was the normal Greek word used for the good news carried by a herald that war was over, as we see in the Septuagint 1 Kings 1:42. So this was the perfect word for the offer of an end to the hostilities between God and humankind.<sup>16</sup> It is the word from which we get our English

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14. The term *ekklēsia* denotes both the community of the redeemed, or the church worldwide and for all time, and only secondarily does it apply to an individual church community. *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*, s.v. “ἐκκλησία.”

15. *Euangelizomai* or its cognates appear fifty-four times in the New Testament for conveying the gospel or proclaiming good news.

16. *Euangelizomai* [to proclaim good news], *euangelion* [good news, gospel], *euangelistēs* [evangelist]. *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Abridged in One Volume* s.v. “εὐαγγελίζω.”

word “evangelize.”<sup>17</sup> “And Jesus answered them [regarding his own ministry], ‘Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached [*euangelizontai*] to them’” (Matt 11:4-5).

The translation for *euangelion* in Anglo-Saxon English was “god-spell” or “good story,” from which we get our modern English word “gospel” (e.g., Luke 1:19; 4:18; Acts 13:32; Eph 6:15; Heb 4:2, 6; 1 Pet 1:12).<sup>18</sup> So, the gospel is the good news the preacher is sent to herald. The herald must credibly announce the news so that people believe it. This is especially important because faith itself comes from truly hearing this word of Christ (Rom 10:14-17). The *kerygma* or message was this *euangelion* of the redeeming purpose of God in Christ; the proclamation of the good news that Jesus Christ, our reconciler, has presented us blameless before God through his death (Col 1:19-22).<sup>19</sup>

### **Ambassador Witnesses**

John most often used a different set of words for a message and the messenger or preacher. These words are morphologically related to *euangelion* and also carry the ambassadorial idea of preaching as a person sent with a message. John wrote, “This is the message [ἀγγελία (*angelia*)] we have heard from him and proclaim [ἀναγγέλλω (*anangellō*)

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17. See, for example, when Solomon was made king. Good news! “While he was still speaking, behold, Jonathan the son of Abiathar the priest came. And Adonijah said, ‘Come in, for you are a worthy man and bring good news’” (1 Kgs 1:42). The Septuagint has εὐαγγέλισαι (*euangelisai*); (3 Kgdms 1:42 LXX).

18. *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Revised*, s.v. “Glad Tidings.”

19. See also Paul’s self-attestation regarding his ministry in Titus 1:1-3.

announce] to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all" (1 John 1:5).<sup>20</sup> The idea of *anangelo* is to give an eyewitness or firsthand report.<sup>21</sup> An angel, ἄγγελος (*angelos*), for example, is a messenger sent directly from the presence of God.

Preachers are ambassadors sent abroad to announce what they themselves have also seen. They are both witnesses and envoys of God's with a message from him.<sup>22</sup> Paul told the people of the church in Rome, "You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim [ἐξαγγέλλω (*ex-angellō*)—proclaim abroad] the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light" (1 Pet 2:9). That is, the preacher proclaims about who God is; this is more than evangelism but theological proclamation.

The closely related word *katangellō* can include teaching of spiritual truths from Scripture, as we see in Paul's letter to the Colossians: "Him we proclaim [*katangelo*], warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ" (Col 1:28).<sup>23</sup>

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20. Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament s.v. "καταλλάσσω." "

21. Paul also used this word to describe his message: "Therefore, O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, but declared [ἀπαγγέλλω (*apangellō*)] first to those in Damascus, then in Jerusalem and throughout all the region of Judea, and also to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds in keeping with their repentance. For this reason the Jews seized me in the temple and tried to kill me" (Acts 26:19-21).

According to the *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, the meaning of the word *euangelizomai* [to proclaim good news] is almost indistinguishable from the word *apangelo* [to report] in 1 John 1:2, 3 (cf. also Acts 26:20; 17:30) where they designate the proclamation of the eternal life "which was with the Father and was made manifest to us" and which has as its goal fellowship with the Father, the Son Jesus Christ, and other believers; thus it designates the event of salvation as the content of the gospel." *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament* s.v. "ἀπαγγέλλω."

22. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* s.v. "ἄγγελος."

23. *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Abridged in One Volume* s.v. "καταγγέλλω."

In his epistle, John describes this firsthand account reporting:<sup>24</sup>

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life—the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us—that which we have seen and heard we proclaim [ἀπαγγέλλω (*apangelo*) announce] also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete. This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim [*apangelo*] to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. (1 John 1:1-5)

According to the *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, the meaning of the word *euangelizomai* (to proclaim good news) is almost indistinguishable from the word *apangellomen* (to report) in 1 John 1:2-3.<sup>25</sup> In this passage the proclamation of the eternal life “which was with the Father and was made manifest to us” designates the event of salvation as the content of the gospel. The compounds of *anangelo* signify more than just a comprehensive announcement of God’s will for salvation; the announcement itself was seen as an effective power.<sup>26</sup> We see too that John’s announcement of the good news of the gospel come in the form of a firsthand account of his experience.

For John and Paul and the other apostles, both their *kerygma* and their *anangelo* were a witnessing to what Christ had done in their own life as it related to what God had already written in the Old Testament Scriptures (Acts 3:18-26; 10:43; 26:22; Rom 3:21; Eph 2:17–22;

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24. In the prelude to his first book, the Gospel of John, John set forth the truth that Jesus himself was the definitive good news, *euangelizo*, God’s λόγος (*lógos* or word): “In the beginning was the Word” (see also Rev 19:13; Heb 4:12).

25. See Footnote 21.

26. The compounds of *anangelo* signify more than just a comprehensive announcement of God’s will for salvation. The announcement itself is seen as an effective power. *Dictionary ἀπαγγέλλω*.

Heb 11:32). Their message was like that of an ambassador who had been out on the battlefield and who was returning to bear witness to what they had seen firsthand, bringing news of the battle and its victory.

It was this kind of human eyewitness *kerygma* given by John and the apostles regarding the Messiah, Jesus Christ, and the works of the Holy Spirit that informed the earliest form of preaching and that became, eventually, the Gospels and Acts (Acts 4:20; 22:15; 26:15-16ff.; 1 Cor 15:3-11; 1 Pet 5:1). For example, Peter testified to what he had seen as a disciple of Jesus and to how he now related that back to the messages of the prophets. “For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty” (2 Pet 1:16-19).

Ambassadorial preaching includes this eyewitness account, of what God has done in our own lives and the lives of others, not just as eternal salvation, but in life, in God’s faithfulness, and his redemptive hand in and around our messy, broken lives. These eyewitness accounts directly tie us into the Old Testament stories and the New Testament. God is still moving and acting much as he always has and we are still part of this action.<sup>27</sup>

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27. I share this perspective with Craig Keener, who is Pentecostal though I am not. But as one who taught in a nondenominational Bible study for several years and who teaches preaching in Nigeria I have grown in the perspective of Scripture as something to be understood as continuing on today. This is particularly apropos to ambassadorial preaching. Keener introduces his book on Spirit hermeneutics: “As followers of the risen Messiah, we are people of the era of the Messiah and the Spirit, inaugurated at Pentecost, a prophetic, eschatological people. Referring to events that began at Pentecost, Acts announces the era of the Spirit that God had earlier promised: “In the last days . . . I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and daughters will prophesy.” A “Spirit hermeneutic” is one shared by the first Pentecostals and most global Pentecostals and charismatics. Craig S. Keener, *Spirit Hermeneutics: Reading Scripture in Light of Pentecost* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2016), 5.

## Ambassador Teachers

Ambassadorial proclaimers also teach. As the church grew, it became more and more imperative for *kerygma*, which had begun as a proclamation of the death, resurrection, and exaltation of Jesus, to include training in righteousness, correction, and comfort.<sup>28</sup> This was often called teaching (διδασκαλία or *didaskalia*) (Eph 4:11-16; 2 Tim 3:16-17; Titus 1:9). So particularly in the Epistles of the New Testament we see *kerygma* that adds instruction, *didaskalia*, in doctrine and the Old Testament, church organization, theology, and even moral training to the proclamation of the good news, because the grace of God and salvation is what trains us to live godly lives (Titus 2).<sup>29</sup> Clearly ambassadorial heralding for Paul, particularly when addressing the church, included teaching in doctrine or practice. Paul commended to Timothy to “preach [*kerysso*] the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching [*didaché*]” (2 Tim 4:2).<sup>30</sup> And when Paul wrote to the church in Rome he said:

Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience,

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28. For the exaltation of Jesus, see Mounce, *The Essential Nature of New Testament Preaching*, 77, 84, 134. For teaching see Mounce, *The Essential Nature of New Testament Preaching*, 134. “Didáskein is one of the main functions of Jesus (Mt. 4:23; 9:35; 11:1). He starts from Scripture in Lk. 4:16ff.; Mt. 5:21ff and then expands on the passage. The disciples, too, begin to teach (Mk. 6:30). It becomes part of their commission in Mt. 28:20. Paul calls himself a preacher, apostle, and teacher (*didáskalos*) in 1 Tim. 2:7; 2 Tim. 1:11. In 1 Cor. 12:28–29, Eph. 4:1, and Acts 13:1 *didáskaloi* are mentioned after or with (apostles and) prophets. According to Kittel et. al. teachers are expositors who edify by their clearer understanding. John speaks of the Holy Spirit as giving direct revelation or teaching In Jn. 8:28; 14:26; 1 Jn. 2:27. *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Abridged in One Volume*, s.v. “διδάσκω.”

29. This is one of the rare New Testament passages where women are mentioned as teachers in the church.

30. The reader may be interested to note these related words: *didáskō* (to teach), *didáskalos* (teacher), *nomodidáskalos* (teacher of the law), *kalodidáskalos* (teacher of what is good), *pseudodidáskalos* (false teacher), *didaskalia* (teaching), *heterodidaskaléō* (to teach strange doctrine), *didaché* (teaching), *didaktós* (taught), *didaktikós* (able to teach). *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* s.v. “διδάσκω.”

which leads to righteousness? But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching [*didaché*] to which you were committed, and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness. (Rom 6:16-18)

In the New Testament, heralding means representing God in all of his fullness and all of the biblical message. So, though preaching is a witness or *kerygma* to God's mighty acts observed both in the Bible and as experienced by preachers in their own lives and the lives of others, the biblical evidence indicates that it was not only evangelistic but also included encouragement and exhortation and doctrinal truth for the church.

However, in the New Testament church, some were called to be *presbeuo* ambassadors, those specifically called to teach doctrine. Paul wrote to Timothy, "Let the elders [*presbeuo*] who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching [simply "speaking" is the word used in Greek here] and teaching [*didaskalia*]" (1 Tim 5:17).<sup>31</sup> But New Testament scholar Robert Mounce explains that in the New Testament there was still always a constant relationship between *kerygma* and *didache*:

Teaching is the expounding in detail of that which is proclaimed. The relation is that of an axiom to its explanation and application. As such, the connection is logical rather than chronological. Or, to change the figure, *kerygma* is foundation and [teaching] *didache* is super-structure; but no building is complete without both. It is only when they are ideally conceived that teaching and preaching can be taken as entirely distinct. In actual practice they overlap, and may be so intermingled that one can hardly ever say, "Now this is preaching," or, "This, on the other hand, is teaching." All *didache* is based on *kerygma*, and it may be seriously doubted whether any *kerygma* ever stands without some measure of explanatory *didache*.<sup>32</sup>

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31. And for example, Stephen, who was a διάκονος (*diakonos* or deacon), was a powerful preacher if the attack against him that ensued is any indication (Acts 7).

32. Mounce, *The Essential Nature of New Testament Preaching*, 42-43.

As ambassadors of Christ's reconciliation, our *kerygma* should include *didache* and vice versa. When we see Jesus came "heralding the kingdom of God," the verb used is *kerussein*. Yet we see Jesus' heralding included teaching things like the Golden Rule and the Beatitudes. Paul's teaching both proclaims the good news and tells us how to live it (Rom 1:16-17). Preaching both invites us into the kingdom and shows us how we can live as members of it.<sup>33</sup>

My point in all of this is that preachers must speak or preach or teach solely as God's mouthpieces, speaking both evangelistic grace and doctrinal truth. They are his ambassadors commissioned to preach what they have been given in Scripture. We deliver only that which we have received (1 Cor 15:3) in its context and the context of our lives and those of our listeners. As Christ's ambassadors, we are like citizens of one country who travel to a different country to bring an important message and to share what we have seen. We are "fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets" (Eph 2:19-22) who deliver God's message to his people and those outside the fold.

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33. William Mounce explains that some, like C. H. Dodd, have wrongly noted a strong difference between *kerygma* and *didache*. He writes, "Professor Dodd has drawn a rather definite line of demarcation between the *kerygma*, which he calls 'the public proclamation of Christianity to the non-Christian world,' and the *didache*, 'ethical instruction.'" (C. H. Dodd, *The Apostolic Preaching and Its Developments* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1944), 7.) But those responding to the *kerygma* are instructed in the *didache*. In a later work, Dodd distinguishes the *didache* more exactly as "a traditional body of ethical teaching given to converts from paganism to Christianity." (C. H. Dodd, *Gospel and Law* (United States: Cambridge University Press, 1951), 15.) Mounce questions Dodd's assertion that the Gospels contain a "clear distinction between preaching and teaching" (Dodd, *The Apostolic Preaching and Its Developments*, 7.) G. C. Stead wrote, "From this ambiguity of expression we may judge that Professor Dodd has overstated his case in reference to any 'clear distinction between preaching and teaching' in the Gospels" (G. C. Stead, "Review: Dodd's Gospel and Law," *Journal of Theological Studies* IV (1953): 139-41.) John Vincent wrote that Dodd's neat distinction between *kerygma* and *didache* is a "rather drastic simplification" and going so far as to say, "The only κήρυγμα, of which we are entitled to speak on the basis of the Synoptics is 'a didactic kerygma'" John J. Vincent, "Didactic Kerygma in the Synoptic Gospels," *Scottish Journal of Theology* X (Sept 1957): 262-72. Quoted in Mounce, *The Essential Nature of New Testament Preaching*, 40.

Having the gift of evangelism does not free the ambassador from teaching, neither does having the gift of teaching mean the preacher should ignore the proclamation of the good news in it. Paul told Timothy to both teach and do the work of an evangelist (2 Tim 4:1-5). Preachers and all those called to build up the body of Christ with words (apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds, teachers) are ambassadors and stewards of the word (Luke 12:42; 1 Cor 4:1, 2; Eph 4:11; Titus 1:7). “As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace: whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ” (1 Pet 4:10-11a).

### **Ambassador of the Word**

As ambassadors of God we must be exegetes of Scripture because the ancient text is our only source, the dependable foundation of God’s clear meaning and purpose. It is not so much that we are historians, students of ancient cultures, experts in ancient rhetoric, grammar, or even Greek or Hebrew vocabulary. But rather, we are children of the Author and brothers and sisters of those who originally wrote. As spiritual descendants of these people of faith, our main goal is to understand who they were, where they were, what they were saying, and especially why the Holy Spirit inspired them to write what they did.

As ambassadors we must soak in the Word because it is how we can best understand the heart of the God we speak for. This allows time for the Holy Spirit to guide. All the work which I recommend in training preachers is not for the purpose of regurgitating exegesis in a sermon but for the purpose of soaking in the message to hear it well. Exegesis includes the

work of soaking so deeply into God's heart through the authors he inspired that we do not miss their appeal. It is not that we cannot hear from the Spirit personally as well or that we are inferior to scholars who have published commentaries, but our goal is different. Our goal is to soak in the original God-given words so we can be excellent ambassadors of the one who inspired them.

Preachers, in a sense, are also a kind of ambassador from the biblical time and place to the people of our congregation. We need to know as much from the Bible as it allows. As God's ambassadors we aim to understand his original purposes from "back then" in order to make sense of them for today so we can speak them out for God. Like an ambassador from a far-off place, we bring God's meaning to a congregation today.

This is what inductive exegesis and thoughtful Spirit-filled study allows us to do. This is true even for those who claim gifts of teaching or prophecy or apostleship. Their prophecy or message is closest to God's when they have soaked in the Word and based their study in the Spirit's message, the one he inspired. God's Word alone is the judge of any prophetic validity. I want to be very clear; the gifts of prophecy and apostleship are gifts that are not for bringing new original truth delivered from the mind of God but rather are used in service to God as students of his dependable Word in order to be reputable ambassadors. Ambassadors are not allowed to originate of new doctrine or to go outside of the message for which they were sent. God's Word is complete.<sup>34</sup>

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34. There is no reason, biblically, to assume that the completion of the canon negates certain of the gifts of the Spirit that were offered to all believers. The canon however closed and limited the message shared in it. Craig Keener complains: "This cessationist argument also appears a curious tactic when we consider the selective nature of the reasoning. Would someone argue that the unity of Christ's multi-gifted body would pass away with the completion of the canon unless there is explicit evidence to the contrary (cf. Eph 4:11-13)? Or more analogously, would someone argue that once the canon is complete, we no longer need the gift of teaching? Why

The believer, and thus the preacher, is also an ambassador of the kingdom of God to the kingdom of darkness. Jesus said to his disciples, “To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God, but for those outside everything is in parables, so that ‘they may indeed see but not perceive, and may indeed hear but not understand, lest they should turn and be forgiven’” (Mark 4:11-12). It is the ambassador preacher who by God’s grace makes the meaning come to light through the power of the Holy Spirit speaking the Word to those the Spirit of God is transforming. If we preach the inspired Word, the Holy Spirit in us is the Holy Spirit who is working in them. This is evangelistic preaching, being the conduit of the Holy Spirit’s mission in someone else’s heart.

Ambassador preachers accept that they are sent. Jesus’ final words, just prior to his ascension, make clear the details of the role of apostles, and thus the role of all believers, by extension, which is to be God’s ambassadors and to go. “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you” (Matt 28:19-20a). That is the ambassador of reconciliation’s ultimate purpose—in other words, to cultivate more ambassadors. Clearly, the New Testament writers considered preaching and teaching to be ambassadorial proclamation.

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[say] some gifts [have ceased] and not others?” Keener, *Spirit Hermeneutics: Reading Scripture in Light of Pentecost*, 55.

The completion of the canon does mean, however, that all revelation and prophecy subsequent to it must grow out of it and be true to it completely. We will see in Chapter Four what happens when the gifts of prophecy or apostleship lose their ambassadorial guardrails and start to declare something new that goes beyond what the Bible clearly explains already.

## Spiritual Gifts for Ambassadors

In the book of Ephesians Paul gave us a list that includes the spiritual gifts for ministry with words. All of them have within them the ambassadorial purpose of building up the body of Christ, while guiding people to live as those reconciled to God. We have already discussed teaching and evangelism and so will briefly mention the others here: shepherding, apostleship, and prophecy. Paul explains the importance of these gifts for not only bringing people to faith but also helping them to mature in faith and to clarify doctrine.

And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. (Eph 4:11-14)

### The Gift of Shepherding

The preacher who has the gift of shepherding is often considered what we now call a pastor. The word ποιμήν (*poimēn*) is used for a leader, either of a herd of sheep or of a Christian community.<sup>35</sup> Jesus himself is called “the Great Shepherd of the Sheep” (John 10:11; Heb 13:20). Ambassador preachers are ambassadors, not rulers themselves; they merely speak for the ruler as they shepherd his sheep. Though some ambassadors may have a gift of shepherding, all ambassadors with any of the speaking gifts may aim for the attitude of a shepherd, pastor, or gentle leader because of Jesus’ example (John 10:11-18; Heb 13:20-21).<sup>36</sup>

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35. *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, s.v. “ποιμήν.”

36. It should be noted that ambassador preachers should also be shepherds of their flock. This attitude follows closely on to role of ambassador and the message of redemptive preaching (particularly redemption as

As Jesus taught, “You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Mark 10:42-45).

Peter’s life and writing show that he took Jesus’ request to feed and tend to his sheep seriously after their early-morning post-resurrection breakfast on the beach (John 21:15-19). Jesus told Peter three times to feed his lambs and sheep and to tend his lambs. Peter then commends this attitude of shepherd to others who lead and teach:

So I exhort the elders [*presbeuteros*] among you, as a fellow elder [*sumpresbeuteros*] and a witness [*martrus*] of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: shepherd [*poimenate*] the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. (1 Pet 5:1-4)

The shepherd’s role is pastoral (or pastor-teacher). Ambassador preachers both feed (teach) and care for (shepherd) people, leading people away from dependance on themselves (the pastor) and to the one they represent, Jesus Christ. This kind of shepherd leader is in clear contrast to what one sees in some churches and ministries where power and wealth, rather than humility and servanthood, are regarded as signs of the Spirit’s powerful anointing.<sup>37</sup> The

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rescue and the promotion of sanctification) though it was not specifically emphasized in this Thesis-Project tested in Nigeria. In Scripture, a shepherd is a humble position that is viewed with great respect. It is the position God willingly put on himself and one he handed down to Moses and King David. The Old Testament prophets were called “shepherds,” as were Christ’s apostles.

37. For contrast see Ezekiel 34:1-4.

shepherd is unlike those preachers who are “in it to win it,” or who want to be seen as “a mighty man [or woman] of God,” and who sit on veritable thrones on the church dais.

Paul’s only “boast,” if one could call it that, was to be an “ambassador in chains” as he asked the brothers and sisters of Ephesus to pray for him “that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel” (Eph 6:19-20). Paul in fact took pride in being able to preach the gospel free of charge, though he noted that those who proclaim the gospel should normally be paid (1 Cor 9:14-18).<sup>38</sup>

Paul tells us that along with the ambassadorial roles of shepherding, teaching, and evangelism there are two more “gifts” or supernaturally provided abilities and God-given proclivities that he has given to the saints to help build up the body of Christ in unity and clear doctrine. Despite Paul’s claim that these gifts are to bring unity, these last two gifts have caused quite a bit of division rather than unity. However, that is not the case in the Global South where many churches consider these two gifts as highly important for ambassador preachers.<sup>39</sup>

### **The Gift of Apostleship in the Ambassador Preacher**

The word ἀπόστολος, (*apostolos*) means “messenger” or “delegate.” This ambassador is one who is sent out, perhaps by a local church or ministry. They may be sent as a messenger,

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38. Regrettably, I have heard that some of those who attended the Thoughtful Proclaimer seminar because they sensed a call to preach in Nigeria were disappointed to learn that preaching, though a position of great responsibility, is not meant to be a station of power or way to gain wealth. For this reason they have joined prosperity gospel ministries where they hoped they could make a better living. Some blame might be put on the churches that are unwilling to pay their pastors at least a living wage.

39. It can be observed that preachers are often called by their “gifts” in Nigeria. For example, “Evangelist so and so,” the “Prophet such and such,” “Apostle what’s his name,” and “Pastor someone.” I have not generally heard people called Teacher, but there may be some who also take that title.

missionary, or to organize a group of believers.<sup>40</sup> Paul uses the word for those sent with help or charity (John 13:16; Phil 2:25; 2 Cor 8:23). Though there is not clear teaching on these gifts in the New Testament, it might be assumed that those with the gift of apostleship today are forward looking as the apostles of Jesus were; they have the gift of seeing over the horizon of what God is doing now to where he is moving next.

The word ἀπόστολος (*apostolos*) in the New Testament carried a range of meaning. It referred first to the apostles of Christ, whom he specially appointed and to whom he gave extraordinary authority for church governance (Matt 10:2; Acts 1:2, 26). This role was for Jesus' twelve. Paul included himself and Barnabas with the disciples of Jesus as an apostle of Jesus Christ because of his direct call from Jesus on the road to Damascus and of the confirmation of this from the twelve apostles of Jesus Christ (Gal 2:7-9)<sup>41</sup>

This authoritative role of apostle ended with Paul. And unfortunately, the gift of apostleship, at least for those originally appointed as apostles by Christ, seems to have carried with it a life marked by great suffering (1 Cor 4:9-13; 2 Cor 4:7-12; 11:23-29). Indeed, much that Paul says about his hard life can probably be construed to be part of the apostle's life.

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40. William Mounce explains that in classical Greek, an *apostolos* was a person of substance sent as an envoy on behalf of a master. Luke usually used the word *apostolos* for one of Jesus' twelve disciples or Paul or Barnabas. Mounce claims that for Luke, an apostle had "unique status in the fledgling churches" whereby all important decisions were made by them. Matthew and Mark use *apostolos* only to refer to the Twelve. But Paul uses *apostolos* for himself because he was called and sent out by Jesus Christ himself as a missionary and because he had met the risen Lord on the road to Damascus (Gal 1:1) Paul also used the term *apostolos* for those who were servants and faithful stewards of the mysteries of God (1 Cor 4:1-2). *Mounce's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old & New Testament Words*, s.v. "Apostle."

41. Barnabas, for example, is called an apostle (Acts 14:14-15) while he acts in a role as missionary evangelist with Paul, but this does not seem to define his ministry.

There is a difference between the authoritative role of apostle, those appointed directly by Jesus Christ and confirmed by Jesus' own chosen Twelve, and the spiritual gift of apostleship that Paul spoke of and that we can assume is still active today.<sup>42</sup> This is a key issue in Nigeria as well as here in the United States where there are movements afoot wherein some claim not only the gift of apostleship (1 Cor 12:28-31) but also the title and governing authority of a biblical apostle.

We should be clear that biblically, the gift of apostleship is no more "supernatural" than any of the other ambassadorial gifts, such as shepherd or teacher, because all are supernatural gifts of the spirit (1 Cor 12:4-11; Heb 2:2-4). Those with the gift of apostleship are gifted to be ambassadors of reconciliation, perhaps in new areas or ministries.

However, opinions on the gift of apostleship differ greatly between churches and denominations and between different parts of the world. John Stott, for example was clear that for him, preachers are not apostles, nor are missionary church planters. For him, even the spiritual gift of apostleship ended with Paul.<sup>43</sup> Yet, we must ask, what then happened to the gift of apostleship? Craig Keener believes the gift of apostle is still in effect today but that an apostolic ambassador's message must be evaluated by the body of Christ and Scripture (2 Cor 11:32).<sup>44</sup> It is good to note that even the apostle Paul allowed his teaching to be weighed against the Scriptures by the Bereans (Acts 17:11).

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42. Wayne A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; Zondervan Pub. House, 2004), 905-11.

43. Stott, *The Preacher's Portrait*, Location 46.

44. Keener, *Spirit Hermeneutics: Reading Scripture in Light of Pentecost*, 108.

Unfortunately, today, the role of apostle, as descendants of Peter and Paul, has been claimed cavalierly and can provide a person with influence and the perceived power to rewrite or add to Scripture.<sup>45</sup> Some consider themselves to have apostolic authority in the same vein as the original Twelve chosen by Jesus.<sup>46</sup> But even in the New Testament there were those who claimed to be apostles and were not. Yet the existence of false apostles did not cause the Holy Spirit to stop giving the gift but put the responsibility for testing their message back onto the church (2 Cor 11:13-15; Rev 2:2).

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45. Douglas Geivett and Holly Pivec, in speaking of the New Apostolic Reformation (NAR) which is growing in the United States and Nigeria, give an example of how this growing idea of modern-day apostles hurts the church. "The biggest innovation of NAR is the belief that apostles, working together with prophets, must take over governance of the church—taking the reins from the pastors, elders, and denominational leaders—so that God's end-time plans can be fulfilled and Christ can return." Later they explain their view that this apostolic movement "accounts for much of the phenomenal growth of Christianity taking place in the Global South—Africa, Asia, and Latin America." They believe that "at its current rate of growth, researchers expect that NAR/Independent churches will soon overtake even the Protestants. Leaders of many of the world's largest and fastest-growing churches promote present-day apostles and prophets, including E. A. Adeboye of Redeemed Christian Church of God in Nigeria (more than five million people) and Embassy of the Blessed Kingdom of God for All Nations in Ukraine (twenty thousand people). Adeboye is considered a prophet by his people. See Holly Pivec R. Douglas Geivett, *A New Apostolic Reformation?: A Biblical Response to a Worldwide Movement* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2014), 14, 19. R. Douglas; Holly Pivec Geivett, *God's Super-Apostles: Encountering the Worldwide Prophets and Apostles Movement* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2014).

46. I must be clear, the gift of apostleship, the supernatural ability to plant ministries and organize churches, to be sent out by the church to do something new, to serve God in the ways similar to ways the apostles did in the early church, does not make one an apostle in the New Testament sense like the Twelve or Paul. In New Testament time apostles appear to have had similar authority and status as Old Testament prophets. Apostles today are gifted to understand Scripture, not to originate new Scripture. For example, it is the prophets and the apostles who works were canonized as Holy Scripture.

It is good to note that the Assemblies of God denominational view matches my own: "We affirm that there are, and ought to be, apostolic- and prophetic-type ministries in the Church, without individuals being identified as filling such an office." R. Douglas Geivett, *New Apostolic Reformation?*, 53, 182.

## The Gift of Prophecy in the Ambassador Preacher

In the New Testament church, ambassadorial gifts also include the gift of prophecy (Acts 2:17-18; 19:6; 1 Cor 14:29-32; 14:6; 1 Thess 5:20-21).<sup>47</sup> Prophecy (προφητεία or *prophēteia*) means one who speaks for God, one who interprets God's will for the benefit of others (Cor 12:10; 13:2, 8; 14:1, 3-5, 24, 31).<sup>48</sup> In the New Testament we see the gift of prophecy used for building up, encouraging, and consolation of a congregation. It is not fortune telling or perfect knowledge, but rather a partial revelation of truth (1 Cor 13:9, 12). Even Old Testament prophets were not fortune tellers. They did not generally offer exact times and dates, but rather they acted as God's direct mouthpieces pointing at sin, injustice, and the inevitability of judgement from God (Exod 10:3; Amos 1:3; Zech 1:3; Mal 3:12; see also Matt 15:7; Mark 7:6; 1 Pet 1:10, 20-21).

The New Testament gift of prophecy is not clearly described. Though it is speaking for God in an ambassadorial sense, it is not in the same sense of the prophets who were given authority by God to pronounce a new message. The prophet today speaks for God by way of understanding the message of Scripture and how it is applied. We see a glimpse of the biblical gift of prophecy as it operated in the early church when Paul wrote, "But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or outsider enters, he is convicted by all, he is called to account by all, the secrets of

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47. According to William Mounce, προφητεία (*prophēteia*) could be a prediction about the future but usually refers to authoritative speech from God. Prophecy should be respected but also tested (1 Thess 5:20-21; cf. 1 Cor 14:29-32). "That is, while prophecy carries some authority, it is ultimately subject to the authority of the apostles and their writings. The gift of prophecy may never contradict the authoritative Word of God, such as is found in Rev (1:3; 22:19)." *Mounce's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old & New Testament Words*, s.v. "Prophecy, New Testament, προφητεία."

48. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, s.v. "προφητεία."

his heart are disclosed, and so, falling on his face, he will worship God and declare that God is really among you” (1 Cor 14:24-25). The clearest teaching on the gift of prophecy is that all prophecies should be evaluated against Scripture and by the church (1 Thess 5:20-21; cf. 1 Cor 14:29-32). Also clear is that this is a gift we should desire (1 Cor 12:31; 14:1, 39). And just as for the gift of apostleship, a true prophecy will never contradict the authoritative Word of God. (1 Cor 14:36-40; Rev 1:3; 22:19).

It should be noted that Pentecostal and charismatic churches in the Global South majority Christian world would not agree with theologians who believe the gifts of prophecy and apostleship have ceased.<sup>49</sup> Keener, who is a Pentecostal, points out that “God would hardly pour out his Spirit, then pour it back again! Indeed, such a contradiction would have played into the hands of those who questioned whether the eschatological Messiah had genuinely come, and would undermine Luke’s apologetic and theology of fulfillment.”<sup>50</sup>

Those who claim that the gifts of apostleship and prophecy, along with the gifts of tongues, healing, and working miracles, have ceased are called “cessationist.” Though not a Pentecostal, I cannot accept that the spiritual gifts of prophecy and apostleship have somehow been dropped from the lists of ambassadorial gifts the church needs while teaching,

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49. Western scholar of global Christianity, Philip Jenkins, notes that in general Christianity in the Global South is quite interested in “the immediate workings of the supernatural, through prophecy, visions, ecstatic utterances, and healing.” Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity*, 3rd ed., *Future of Christianity Trilogy* (Oxford University Press, 2011), 134.

Historian Mark Noll observes that Western Christians working in the Majority World “consistently report that most Christian experience reflects a much stronger supernatural awareness than is characteristic of even charismatic and Pentecostal circles in the West.” Mark A. Noll, *The New Shape of World Christianity: How American Experience Reflects Global Faith* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009), 34. Keener, *Spirit Hermeneutics: Reading Scripture in Light of Pentecost*, 94.

50. Keener, *Spirit Hermeneutics: Reading Scripture in Light of Pentecost*, 52.

shepherding, and evangelism remain.<sup>51</sup> Yet I would agree that Scripture never indicates in any way that the Christian preacher is a prophet in the Old Testament sense of speaking new inspired Scripture, but a prophet in the New Testament sense of understanding situations and people's hearts.

In other words, the prophet of today is one who tells forth a message from God with a Spirit-given clear eye to see, as the Old Testament prophets had, not only the application of the already given Word of God but beyond the meaning of a text to the heart of God for the needs, injustices, and spiritual problems facing individuals and the world and church today. In this way the prophet of today speaks as God's ambassador in much the same way as the Old Testament prophets did.

We have no reason in Scripture to think this has changed. Jesus told his disciples that the Holy Spirit would come on the believers and speak to them about things to come (John 16:13-15). Yet those who believe the gifts of prophecy and apostleship have ceased do so based on the fact that they assume these gifts are no longer needed as they once were in the early church.<sup>52</sup> We now have the completed canon which is, by definition, the measuring stick by which all prophecy or apostolic revelation must be checked anyway. Cessationists are right in

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51. Keener reports that in general however, Christianity in the Global South is quite interested in something more than the supernatural gifts of apostleship, prophecy, shepherding, teaching, and evangelism. They believe in "the immediate workings of the supernatural, through . . . visions, ecstatic utterances, and healing." Keener, *Spirit Hermeneutics: Reading Scripture in Light of Pentecost*, 94.

52. Stott wrote, "The last occurrence in the Bible of the formula 'the word of God came unto' refers to John the Baptist (Lk. 3:2). He was a true prophet. There were also prophets in New Testament days like Agabus (Acts 21:10), and prophecy is mentioned as a spiritual gift (Rom. 12:6; 1 Cor. 12:10, 29; Eph. 4:11), but this gift is no longer bestowed upon men in the Church. Now that the written word of God is available to us all, the word of God in prophetic utterance is no longer needed. The word of God does not come to men today. It has come once and for all; men must now come to it." Stott, *The Preacher's Portrait*, Location 42-46.

their teaching that apostolic or prophetic revelation that falls outside the dependable Word of God should not be trusted today (2 Pet 2:1; 1 John 4:1).

But the one who has the gift of prophecy today, as an ambassador of God, or one might say of the Spirit, expounds to clarify issues in the world and matters in the church which go against God's Word. Though it is not clear, it can be assumed that prophets today, in a similar way to prophets of the Old Testament, may speak on prophetic topics, such as injustice, social issues, and the church's ignorance of God's ways.<sup>53</sup> Similarly, biblically, the apostles and prophets of today should use their gifts to build up the body of Christ and the kingdom of God in the world. The fact that there are many who use and abuse the titles of prophet and apostle should not be a reason to ignore those gifts.

Thus far in this chapter we have discussed some biblical roles ambassador preachers take based on the words for "preaching" and "proclamation" in the New Testament. This is not a complete list of all the roles of a preacher but is based in those gifts Paul mentions in Ephesians 4. John Stott, in *The Preacher's Portrait*, emphasized metaphors for the preacher such as steward, father, and servant. I have aimed to keep the focus here more directly on ambassadorship.<sup>54</sup>

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53. Stott again, "And however truly [one] preaches in the power of the Holy Spirit, he is not 'inspired' by the Spirit in the sense in which the [Old Testament] prophets were. It is true that 'whoever speaks' is instructed to do so 'as one who utters oracles of God' (1 Pet. 4:11). This, however, is not because he is himself, or has received, a fresh divine oracle, but because he is a steward (1 Pet. 4:10) . . . to whom have been entrusted the Holy Scriptures, which are 'the oracles of God' (Rom. 3:2). Stott, *The Preacher's Portrait*, Location 39-42.

54. Having said that, prophet and apostle are direct ambassadorial roles and are considered as roles for preachers.

We must now return to the second half of our key passage, 2 Corinthians 5:20.

“Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us.” We will discuss preaching as being ambassadors for God. Chapter Four will contain a discussion on the message of the ambassador, reconciliation, the atonement that makes that possible, and the results of the atonement in light of biblical and African culture and the prosperity gospel’s view.

### **God Makes His Appeal through His Ambassadors**

The Reformer Heinrich Bullinger, writing in the 1566 Second Helvetic Confession, made the bold statement that preaching the Word of God is the Word:

THE PREACHING OF THE WORD OF GOD IS THE WORD OF GOD. Wherefore when this Word of God is now preached in the church by preachers lawfully called, we believe that the very Word of God is proclaimed, and received by the faithful; and that neither any other Word of God is to be invented nor is to be expected from heaven: and that now the Word itself which is preached is to be regarded, not the minister that preaches; for even if he be evil and a sinner, nevertheless the Word of God remains still true and good.<sup>55</sup>

One way that God makes his appeal to the world through his Word is as it is proclaimed by his ambassador preachers. “Ambassador of God” applies to all believers, but I am speaking here of those specifically called by God to the task of being his ambassadors through preaching using the ambassadorial gifts of the Spirit, namely, apostle, prophet, evangelist, shepherd, and

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55. Heinrich Bullinger, *The Second Helvetic Confession (Annotated Edition)* (Germany: Jazzybee Verlag, 2012), Chap 1, Paragraph 4. It should be noted that John Frame disagrees with the more obvious meaning of this passage from the Confession: “Given this exposition and the place of this paragraph in the context of the Confession’s general discussion of Scripture, it is plain that ‘Word of God’ here refers to the Scriptures, not to the preaching itself, though the heading might suggest otherwise. The Word of God is what the preacher preaches, the subject of his sermon, the content that he intends to expound. The point of the Confession here is that we should not seek the word of God in some new revelation, but rather in the old revelation, the Scriptures, to which we have access through preaching.” Frame, *The Doctrine of the Word of God*, 261.

teacher (Eph 4:11). A preacher hears from God and learns God's thoughts and heart through studying his Word. He or she then stands as God's representative in the pulpit so that people in our churches can hear who God is, what God is like, and what he has to say in his Word through our voice. Nineteenth-century Bible teacher and author Arthur Pink, in giving advice to ministers, claims they have but two principal offices to give to those in their care, "to speak for God to them, and to supplicate God *for* them."<sup>56</sup> Our congregations are like the Greeks who approached Philip at the "feast" with the request, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus" (John 15:21).

The Reformers believed that God made his appeal to humans through the written Word and through preaching based on it. John Calvin affirmed that preaching is speaking for God. He explains the preacher's task by saying, "The Word goeth out of the mouth of God in such a manner that it likewise 'goeth out of the mouth' of men; for God does not speak openly from heaven, but employs men as his instruments, that by their agency he may make known his will."<sup>57</sup> The Reformers were clear, that for them preaching was one of God's primary ways of communicating to humanity. That is the point, in fact, of preaching: to communicate God's message to others.

Calvin Miller explained that preachers speak for God out of their love for him. "Preachers are incarnational souls, who want God to inhabit them, for they long to be like Christ . . . When they speak for God—when they say, 'Thus saith the Lord'—they mean to be

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<sup>56</sup> Arthur Walkington Pink, White, Donald R., *A Guide to Fervent Prayer* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1981), 114.

<sup>57</sup> John Calvin, *Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Isaiah*, reprint ed., 22 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1981), 8, 2, 172. See also Ronald S. Wallace, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Word and Sacrament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1957), 82-95. James F. Stitzinger, "The History of Expository Preaching," in *Rediscovering Expository Preaching* (Dallas, TX: Word Publishing, 1992), 49-50.

heard, and their love affair with God endues them with the confidence that they are not just lobbyists for virtue, they are faith-filled servants.”<sup>58</sup> It is the preacher’s service to God in gratefulness for salvation as well as for the gifts with which he has equipped us that causes us to preach.

Paul’s attitude, as we saw above, was that of a prisoner for the Lord, he was compelled to preach in a manner worthy of what he considered to be his calling; with humility, gentleness, patience, and love, not only for God, but for his fellow humans (Eph 4:1-3). Paul charged his protégé Timothy also with preaching to reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching” (2 Tim 4:1-2) by preaching the Word.

### God’s Appeal Is Always Redemptive

Every text is speaking for God. And God is always in the business of reconciliation and redemption if we include in that understanding redemption as life change. The preacher who searches for God’s divine intent understands that the Word of God, no matter what else it may be saying from place to place, will always convey God’s primary intent, the Divine Intent of reconciliation and redemption, life change. The ambassador preacher, keeping this constantly in mind, can let God speak even from the most arcane seeming Old Testament narratives because we aim past meaning for intent; God’s purpose for each letter of his Word.

Ambassadorial *kerygma* is always both *euangelion* and *didaskalia* if we are speaking for God. If we apply a text but stop short of considering its place in God’s fuller message, in the

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58. Calvin Miller, *Preaching: The Art of Narrative Exposition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2006), 31.

wholeness of the canon and considering how it speaks for God, then we are not preaching as God's ambassador. Without thinking canonically and redemptively, we cannot rightly speak in God's stead.<sup>59</sup> Even with the best historical-cultural exegesis and a clear knowledge of ancient vocabulary we can easily miss God's redemptive voice if we don't listen for its fulness.

Some will conclude that the mistake in all of this is that if we are doing expository preaching and speaking with regard to the literal meaning of texts, we often cannot be evangelistic or doctrinal or pastoral from the same text. And since most of God's message is couched in ancient narrative, it either can't be preached or must be preached as a history lesson at best. But Kevin Vanhoozer helps us to understand that preaching the "literal text" from a theological point of view means we consider more than the textual meaning, the locution, of the text. We also must consider the spirit of the text, or the "illocutionary intent," the purpose for which the text is written.<sup>60</sup> This must always be considered if we are really meaning to speak for God from all of his Word. It is this illocutionary intent of the Spirit with a capital "S" that the preacher seeks and then attempts to make real to the listener.<sup>61</sup> It is the effect of the text, the thing the text enacts or is meant to enact in the life of the believer and of the seeker that the preacher recreates in a sermon. Logically then to speak for God we must focus on the intent of the author he inspired and the overall intent of God's Word.

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59. It is my contention that these text-based sermons often stop short of even the author's intent by drawing conclusions from verses or paragraphs from outside of the author's clear purposes for writing.

60. Speech and written communication contain three actions—locutionary (what it says), illocutionary (what it does), and perlocutionary (what it effects). Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?*, 312.

61. The perlocution is the effect of the text.

## **Ambassadors Must Be in Relationship with Christ**

David Martyn Lloyd-Jones writes on the commission we have received as preachers: “An ambassador is not a man who voices his own thoughts or his own opinions or views, or his own desires. The very essence of the position of the ambassador is that he is a man who has been ‘sent’ to speak for somebody else . . . He is the bearer of a message, he is commissioned to do this, he is sent to do this; and that is what he must do.”<sup>62</sup>

To be clear, ambassadors of God are representatives under God’s authority. Just because we say something does not make it the equivalent of the Word of God, but when we preach the Word of God, when God chooses to speak through us, then our words become the word of God to people. It is God, not people, who made the choice to call humans to be his ambassadors. His Word, both written Scripture and preaching, comes through Spirit mediation and out of the mouths or pens of people. In the case of preachers, God’s word is heard through people commissioned by God and fed on the Word of God.

This servant role of ambassador requires us to stay closely connected to Jesus Christ. Jesus shared with his disciples, just prior to going to the cross, that abiding in Christ, in the vine, is the only way to bear healthy fruit (John 15:1-11). Jesus warned that those who don’t bear fruit will be pruned or eventually cut off and thrown into the fire (John 5:2, 6). Though God can use whoever he wants to stand in for him, his best use is those who live lives of obedience and who remain close to Jesus Christ through his word and who are alert to the winds of the Spirit. Those preachers truly speak for God, in a way that brings glory and honor to him, by preaching

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62. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, “The Sermon and the Preaching,” in *Preaching and Preachers* (Zondervan, 2012), 71.

the purposes of God from the Word of God under commission from God. All others should beware.

God's sovereignty over how he proclaims his own word is not an excuse for bad character or not giving him our best work. Paul warns Timothy, "I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word" (2 Tim 4:1-2). The man or woman who preaches must take seriously the fact that they have a charge, a commission directly from God to speak for him. We are ultimately accountable to God.

The character of his ambassadors is important to God and to his listeners. Timothy taught that we should not promote sinful individuals to leadership, and that leaders should do their "best to present [themselves] to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth" (2 Tim 2:15; see 1 Tim 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-2:11). Obviously, we are not immune to sin, but as new creations, especially as ambassadors for God, we should live in a way that brings honor to our King, the one we speak for. Paul urges us to exercise self-control in all things: "Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable . . . but I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified" (1 Cor 9:24-27). And J. Kent Edwards insists, "Deep sermons cannot be preached by shallow people. Profound sermons only come from people who enjoy a profound relationship with God.

Like it or not, the condition of our personal relationship with God will control our public ministry for God.”<sup>63</sup>

### **God Uses Finite Humans as His Mouthpiece**

Claiming to speak for God is, or should be, a terrifying prospect. We are humans, we are sinners, we are not always the best of preachers. How could God use us to speak for him? It is the words we speak but also our willingness to be used that allows us to be God’s mouthpieces. It is for this reason we are dependent on the Word of God for our message. Sidney Greidanus insists that preachers really speak for God only if they speak God’s Word, which we can know only through what he has given us in his written word, the Bible.

This high view of preaching can never be the boast of preachers, of course; it can only underscore their responsibility. For with the prophets we noticed that their authority did not reside, ultimately, in their calling or office but in the words they spoke, whether they were from the Lord. So it is with preachers today: they have a word from the Lord, but only if they speak the *Lord’s* word. The only norm we have today for judging whether preachers speak the word of the Lord is the Bible.<sup>64</sup>

Al Mohler wrote comfortingly, “In preaching, finite, frail, and fault-ridden human beings bear bold witness to the infinite, all-powerful, and perfect Lord. Such an endeavor would smack of unmitigated arrogance and over-reaching were it not for the fact that God Himself has set us to the task.”<sup>65</sup>

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63. J. Kent Edwards, *Deep Preaching: Creating Sermons that Go Beyond the Superficial* (Nashville, Tenn.: B&H Academic, 2009), Location 1186.

64. Sidney Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text: Interpreting and Preaching Biblical Literature* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1988), 9.

65. R. Albert Mohler, “A Theology of Preaching,” in *Handbook of Contemporary Preaching* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1992), 15.

## Preaching Is Not Speaking about God but for God

Preaching then is not talking about God but speaking for God. Robert Mounce wrote that preaching is allowing God to speak through us. “The words of the preacher are simply the medium through which the Divine Word comes. It is God who speaks. This was what happened on the day of Pentecost. When the crowd heard the message, they were ‘cut to the heart.’ Why? Not because of any irresistible logic or persuasive oratory on the part of Peter, but because they had been confronted in judgment by God Himself.”<sup>66</sup>

David Buttrick clarifies that as preachers who speak for God, we are the means of grace,

We must modestly claim that preaching is “the Word of God.” We may be two-legged little human beings, but we stand before the mysterious Presence-in-Absence and, through Christ, mediate understandings of God . . . Good heavens, what a vocation! Though we are quite aware of our humanness, nevertheless, by faith we preach as if we were means of grace, which we are! We believe that through our words God reaches out, claims, converts, and saves, because we continue the preaching of Jesus Christ. So our ministerial vocation is peculiar . . . Christ transfers preaching to us, and gives grace to our speaking, so that, odd as it may seem, our sermons are Word of God to human communities.<sup>67</sup>

God uses people to speak his Word. His Word is found in its clearest expression in the written, Spirit-inspired Bible. Yet God evidentially feels that his Word finds a special expression when brought through the mouths of Christ’s disciples, his ambassadors.

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<sup>66</sup> Mounce, *The Essential Nature of New Testament Preaching*, 154.

<sup>67</sup> David Buttrick, *Homiletic: Moves and Structures* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1987), 457.

## Ambassadorial Preaching Is Spirit-Empowered

Ambassadorial preaching is Spirit empowered. Carl Henry defined preaching as: “heralding to the world the message of the Spirit-inspired prophets and apostles, or more expressly, the Spirit-illuminated Word of Scripture, Spirit-anointed couriers carry forward the ongoing task of proclamation.”<sup>68</sup> It is not merely saying things about God or things about the Bible. It is speaking the Word of God as the words of God to those God commissions and empowers us to preach to.<sup>69</sup> Paul writes that “the kingdom of God does not consist in talk but in power” (1 Cor 4:20; 1 Thess 1:4-5). Empowered preaching that speaks the Word of God to the people of God cannot help but be efficacious.<sup>70</sup>

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68. Henry, *God, Revelation, and Authority*, 476.

69. We see the renewal of the movement toward considering not the text but the intention of God first in the theology of Karl Barth. His theology, particularly the appearance of his *The Word of God and the Word of Man*, translated into English in 1928, had a formidable effect on preaching. See H. Grady Davis, *Design for Preaching* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1958), 105, cited in John M. Rottman, “Performative Language and the Limits of Performance in Preaching,” in *Engaging Worship*, ed. Clayton J. Schmit Jana Childers (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 76.

Speaking on preaching, Barth said, “*Speaking the word of God* is the *promise* of Christian preaching. Promise is not fulfillment. Promise means that fulfillment is guaranteed us. Promise does not do away with the necessity of believing but establishes it. Promise is *man’s* part, fulfillment is *God’s*.” Karl Barth, *The Word of God and the Word of Man*, trans. Douglas Horton (New York, NY: Harper and Row, 1957), 124-25.

According to Rottman, “Barth’s impact was already felt with the publication of his Romans commentary (*der Römerbrief*) in 1919. Barth emphasized the Word of God as active and alive.” Rottman, “Performative Language and the Limits of Performance in Preaching,” in *Engaging Worship*, 76.

70. Barth’s view on preaching seeks to remind us that it conveys the word of God when God’s Word is heard, it is efficacious. He says this because he believes that the Word of God, if it be the Word of God, must cause something to change. It cannot return “empty” as it is the same word that brought the world into being (Isa 55:11). This view may be disturbing to some evangelicals. But we must give credit to Barth because for all his verbiage, he took the critical crisis of biblical studies in his day and stood against it, firmly, for the Word of God as always powerful and active since it is God’s speech. His thought precedes that of Abraham Kuruvilla and his idea of what the Bible is “doing” and also Nicholas Wolterstorff’s “God’s speech.”

Barth sought to give God’s Word the respect it is due according to its self-proclamation. For Barth the Word of God has a threefold form and is heard 1) in the preaching of the Bible where the proclamation literally conveys the Word of God to the heart of the listener when God’s Spirit is present (the preacher as ambassador); 2) God’s Word is present in the reading of the Scripture when it is truly heard and appropriated by the reader/hearer (what we might today call dual discourse, God Word coming through the author’s writing); and 3) God’s Word is revealed to humans by God himself (as revelation) based on God’s work on the hearer’s heart when they hear or

## Preaching the Word of God Is an Effectual Event

When preaching truly speaks the word of God it is an effectual event. Robert Mounce explains that a sermon “may be true, interesting, and even vitally important, but unless something actually takes place, it is not preaching. True preaching is an event—an event that effectively communicates the power and redemptive activity of God.”<sup>71</sup> Even the Lord Jesus did not convince everyone when he told stories, nor was everyone saved when Peter preached at Pentecost. So, I am not saying that God will do what we want or that we should expect something as a result of God’s use of our preaching; I am saying that God will do what he wants as a result of our preaching if indeed we are speaking for God. The fact is, God does things through his Word, through preaching, even if only like water flowing over a hard cold boulder slowly smooths it or rolls it along, something must happen if God is speaking through us.

Isaiah claimed that God’s word would not return empty:

For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven  
and do not return there but water the earth,  
making it bring forth and sprout,  
giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater,  
so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth;  
it shall not return to me empty,  
but it shall accomplish that which I purpose,  
and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it. (Isa 55:10–11)

Sidney Greidanus makes this clear: “But if God speaks through contemporary preachers, then this word of God is also God’s deed today, a redemptive event. This view reflects Paul’s

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read Scripture. Karl Barth, *The Doctrine of the Word of God*, vol. 1, part 1, *Church Dogmatics*, ed. Thomas F. William Geoffrey Bromiley (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 2004), 121.

71. Mounce, *The Essential Nature of New Testament Preaching*, 155.

amazing statement that the gospel is ‘the power of God for salvation to every one who has faith’” (Rom 1:16; cf. 1 Cor 1:18).<sup>72</sup>

Greidanus also affirms, “Preaching is not merely a word *about* God and his redemptive acts but a word *of* God and as such is itself a redemptive act.”<sup>73</sup> Haddon Robinson also understood this: “To the New Testament writers, preaching stands as the event through which God works.”<sup>74</sup> The Word of God, be it written or preached, if it be the Word of God will change people (Acts 14:27-28; Heb 4:12-13; Rom 1:16-17; 1 Cor 16:9).

I follow Barth’s explanation of this dynamic. He explains that we should expect that God is acting on the hearts and minds of our listeners through our words:

We can hear Christian sermons . . . and simply hear words, human words, which we either understand or do not understand but along with which there is for us no corresponding event. But if so, then neither in proclamation nor Holy Scripture has it been the Word of God that we have heard. If it had been the Word of God, not for a moment could we have looked about for God’s acts. The Word of God itself would then have been the act. The Word of God does not need to be supplemented by an act. The Word of God is itself the act of God.<sup>75</sup>

Stott believes preaching is an event as well. He quotes Barth: “When the church bells ring, ‘there is in the air an expectancy that something great, crucial and even momentous is to

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72. Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text: Interpreting and Preaching Biblical Literature*, 9.

73. Greidanus further writes, “In expository preaching the biblical text is neither a conventional introduction to a sermon on a largely different theme, nor a convenient peg on which to hang a ragbag of miscellaneous thoughts, but a master which dictates and controls what is said.” Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text: Interpreting and Preaching Biblical Literature*, 5, 11.

74. Haddon W. Robinson, *Biblical Preaching: the Development and Delivery of Expository Messages*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2001), 19.

75. Barth, *The Doctrine of the Word of God*, vol. 1, part 1, 143. Regarding the efficacy of the Word of God in bringing about faith; Barth also writes that it is by God’s grace that there are those who believe and those who don’t, those who are saved and those who are lost. He refers to Luke 2:34, Romans 9:33, 2 Corinthians 2:15 (Barth, *The Doctrine of the Word of God*, vol. 1, part 1, 153-54.). Preaching proclaims Christ and his answer of yes to all who will come to him (2 Cor 1:19-22).

happen.’ What is this? It is the people’s expectation that they will hear God’s Word, that is, answers to their ultimate questions.”<sup>76</sup> J. I. Packer also boils down ambassadorial preaching as an event. Preaching is “the event of God himself bringing to an audience a Bible-based, Christ-related, life-impacting message of instruction and direction through the words of a spokesperson.”<sup>77</sup>

In teaching preaching in Nigeria then, I commend preaching the Word of God, not only preaching the words of Scripture but also God’s purposes for what is written. I want to convey the truth the preaching is not just speaking about God but speaking for God as his ambassadors.

### **Ambassadorial Preaching for Nigerian Pastors**

Ambassadorial preaching is for every preacher. Nigerian preachers are no different. The church of Nigeria is not in its infancy, and the huge megachurches there are not new ministries. The church itself, as we discussed before, is growing at an incredible pace. But regardless of God’s grace and patience toward us, we know that unless a house is built on the rock it will collapse. And the ruin it causes will be great (Luke 6:46-49). There is great danger that the excesses of power and wealth, syncretism, and unbiblical theologies will cause the church of

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76. Stott, quoting Barth, who he claims is the one who has spoken most persuasively about the need for relevant biblical preaching, “At a ministers’ meeting in 1922 he gave an address entitled ‘The Need and Promise of Christian Preaching.’ He spoke personally of his twelve years in the pastorate.” John R. W. Stott, *Between Two Worlds: the Challenge of Preaching Today* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1982), 148.

77. J. I. Packer, “Some Perspectives on Preaching,” in *Preaching the Living Word*, ed. David Jackman (Fearn, Ross-shire: Christian Focus, 1999), 28.

Jesus Christ in Nigeria to either become something other than the biblical church of Jesus Christ or to collapse.

Sunday Jide Komolafe warns, “In order to actualize the true existence of the church [of Nigeria] in an effective and viable witness to the world, then, it is high time that the perspective of service to the kingdom be stressed forcefully in the mentoring, maturing, and empowerment of leaders for the twenty-first century Nigeria.<sup>78</sup> So, though there are other solid homiletical perspectives of what a preacher is, the ambassadorial preacher motif, the idea of preachers being under Christ’s authority as servants, is the one I feel best embodies the role of preacher whose job is to tell people what has already been given to them in the whole of Scripture. It also addresses the need for studying God’s Word in its entirety, rather than verses out of context or popular theologies foreign to it. Teaching preachers in Nigeria to interpret Scripture, mentoring them, and empowering them to be ambassadors of God is needed so that the church of Nigeria grow theologically healthy and sustainable.

The next chapter will speak to what the gospel message is: the message of atonement and reconciliation and how clarity on that issue is key to the transformation of Nigeria’s next generation of preachers .

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78. Komolafe, *The Transformation of African Christianity*, 374.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION:

#### PREACHING FOR RECONCILIATION, THE SIGNIFICANCE OF ATONEMENT

The message of the ambassador preacher is that God wants to be in relationship with us and has provided a way for us to be united with Him through the atoning work of Christ on the cross. A defective perspective of what the atonement is and what it offers skews everything else one believes as a Christian regarding the reconciled life. Therefore, this chapter summarizes what the Bible teaches about reconciliation and the atonement including the gift of the Holy Spirit and the promise of future restoration from the results of the Fall (Gen 3). Atonement is important for the Nigerian context as the prosperity gospel and the African traditional religious' skewed perspective feeds unbiblical theology and syncretism.

Along the way I will point out some subtle but important differences between biblical Christianity and what passes for it in many churches in Nigeria. Missiologists, seeing so many people check the box "Christian," are delighted at the rapid growth. But what is missing from the teachings called "Christian" in so many places in Nigeria is the problem. The nature of Christ's work on the cross on our behalf must be clearly understood because it is the root of what Christianity is. Any distortions, no matter how subtle, lead people to be disappointed in God, confused, and ultimately still lost in sin and trying to be justified by works.<sup>1</sup>

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1. This is not to say that a person must have a certain theology or perfect understanding of Scripture to be saved from damnation. But faith in faith alone, faith in yourself, faith that everything works out for a reason, faith that someone else (i.e. a prophet) can cleanse you from evil influences etc. is not the same as faith in Jesus Christ

For this reason, I believe teaching the preachers, those who feed the sheep, to read the Bible contextually and canonically is the way to correcting these distortions. So, we return to our central passage from Chapter Three: “In Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation” (2 Cor 5:17–20). This message of what reconciliation is, since it is one of the most important of the divine Author’s intentions, is fundamental to an evangelical hermeneutic and has been entrusted to preachers specifically to share. Reconciliation is the result of the atonement of Christ. Christ’s death results in the offer of salvation for those who accept it by faith. But the atonements fullest benefits, the renewal of all things on earth, those things that became broken in the Fall, will not be completely manifested until the Second Coming of Christ or the glorification of the believer in heaven (Rom 8:17-25; Eph 1:13-14; 1 Pet. 4:13; 5:1; 1 John 3:2). Missing this important point is the basic problem with the prosperity gospel. Continuing to be confused by this delayed fulfillment of heaven on earth and living with one foot in biblical Christianity and the other still in the African traditional religions or ATR, as we will also call it, is the reality for many Christians in Nigeria.

The underlying issues causing the presenting symptoms we saw in Chapter One, are the theological difficulties that result from blending Christianity and ATR and they seem to have found their solution in the new pseudo-religion called the prosperity gospel. This is a deep

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as the propitiation for sin. That alone is the faith that provides for our redemption from sin and justification before God. Being born again does not only mean that you are living out you’re your best life yet, being born again means being eternally justified before God, free from the power of sin and darkness, and raised to new and eternal life as a result of Christ’s shed blood.

theological problem for the Christians of Nigeria. The only real solution is the true light of the gospel as played out in the canon of scripture. That is the reason for this chapter.

### **Thesis Roadmap So Far**

A preacher's interpretation of the Bible, wherever in the world they minister, is inevitably influenced by their worldview, cultural ideals, tribal, or political beliefs, popular pseudo- or sub-Christian philosophies, other influential preachers, and sometimes even old-fashioned greed and sin nature. But remaining focused on only these things, while ignoring the worldviews and culture of the authors of the Bible and especially God's intent for the Bible has had a deleterious effect on the proper interpretation of the Bible. Even in teaching Bible interpretation for preaching in Nigeria, I am admittedly stuck in my Western evangelical worldview and culture which may not be fully in line with God's view.

So, to ameliorate the collision of all these worldviews I have been setting out in the last three chapters what I believe can be a firm foundation for preaching. The three theological underpinnings I think necessary are 1) a dual (A)uthorial intent hermeneutic, 2) a homiletical perspective of preaching as an ambassador of God. And now 3) the ultimate purpose for preaching, which is to call people to be reconciled to God and to show them how live in light of their new position as God's adopted children.

I make the case that the most basic intent of God for his Word and thus the overarching theme of ambassadorial preaching is that God longs to be in relationship with his children, to be reconciled. God is always calling his children home. The atonement means that for our

sakes, Jesus Christ took on the responsibility for our sin though he himself had never sinned (Rom. 8:3; 4:25; 2 Cor 5:21; Gal. 3:13). This allows us to be brought back into proper relationship with God the Father, in other words, we can be reconciled to Him.

As Jesus once said to the Jews who had believed him, “If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” (John 8:31–32) In the spirit of studying the truth so that we can be set free from the counterfeit view I will start with a brief overview of the atonement.

### **The Penal Substitution View of the Atonement**

Philosopher, theologian, and apologist, William Lane Craig has succinctly described the atonement as:

A rich, multifaceted . . . theory featuring penal substitution, satisfaction of divine justice, imputation of sin and divine righteousness, pardon, and moral influence. These aspects of the theory do justice to the biblical motifs of sacrifice, including expiation of sin and propitiation of God, Isaiah’s Servant of the LORD, whose vicarious, punitive suffering serves to make many accounted righteous, divine justice and forensic justification, redemption from sin and death, and Christ’s representation of us before God.<sup>2</sup>

The Apostle Paul explains the atonement:

For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die— but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.

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2. William Lane Craig, *Atonement and the Death of Christ* (Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2020), 272.

More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation. (Rom 5:6–11)

Because the atonement covers so many theological elements, it is not surprising that theologians over millennia and across miles can differ on which aspects are the most important. This Thesis-Project takes the traditional reformation view, sometimes called “substitution,” but with an added emphasis on what will one day be Christ’s ultimate victory over Satan and demonic powers and the power of the Holy Spirit in the believer today to defeat sin and spiritual darkness (Rom 8:31; 1 John 4:4). This spiritual power element of the atonement is very important for those in Nigeria and should be included in teaching on the atonement.<sup>3</sup>

The underlying basis of the substitution view of the atonement is that the wrath of God, both past, present, and future was quenched by the blood of Christ (Isa 51:17; 53:7 Jer 25:15; John 3:36; Rom 2:5; 5:9).<sup>4</sup> Though we stood as enemies of God, Christ’s sacrificial death made propitiation for our sins. In other words, it appeased the wrath we deserved to receive from

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3. Perhaps because of ignoring the spiritual and power elements of the atonement, missionaries who came to Africa made little headway. According to missiologists, Peter White, and Cornelius Niemandt, western missionaries who initially came to plant Christianity in Ghana ignored the importance of the spiritual realm to Africans. “Ghanaian Christians were experiencing a missing link. That is, they saw that their spiritual needs were not being met by the then mainline churches planted by the Western missionaries (e.g. missionaries from the Roman Catholic Church, the Anglican Church, the Presbyterian Church of Ghana, and the Methodist Church [Busia 1972:239-246]).” This was “mainly because they did not address the traditional worldview of Ghanaians, a worldview embedded in the belief in spirits.” Subsequently, Pentecostalism became a part of Ghanaian mission and church history “Culture blended with the Holy Spirit movement.” This made many Ghanaians more comfortable, and as a result, “Pentecostalism is not only the predominant Christian type of worship in Ghana, but almost all the mainline churches have been “pentecostalized” as well.” Peter White, and Cornelius Niemandt, “The Role of the Holy Spirit in Ghanaian Pentecostal Churches: A Missiological Study,” *Nederduitse Gereformeerde Teologiese Tydskrif* 55, no. 1-2 (2014). 55, 1-2 (2014): 471-72; 81-82, <https://dx.doi.org/10.5952/55-1-2-536>.

4. Geoffrey Butler shares: “Long considered a key tenet of evangelical theology, the doctrine of penal substitutionary atonement has come under particularly intense scrutiny in recent years.” Geoffrey Butler, “Appeasement of a Monster God? A Historical and Biblical Analysis of Penal Substitutionary Atonement,” *Themelios* 46, no. 1 (April, 2021): 130.

God by removing our sins from his sight (Rom 3:25; Heb 2:14-17, 9:5; 1 John 2:2, 4:10).<sup>5</sup> Christ's blood in essence covered our sins from God's perspective (Ps 51:1, 9-17; Isa 43:25; John 1:29; Acts 3:17–26; Acts 20:28; Col 2:13–14; 1 Pet 1:19).

J I Packer explains:

God's wrath is his righteousness reacting against unrighteousness; it shows itself in retributive justice. But Jesus Christ has shielded us from the nightmare prospect of retributive justice by becoming our representative substitute, in obedience to his Father's will, and receiving the wages of our sin in our place.<sup>6</sup>

Theologians of the reformation often used the word "satisfaction," rather than atonement, because Christ, on the cross, "satisfied" the demands of justice that had to be met due to broken laws.<sup>7</sup> This highlights the idea of "vicarious atonement" because God, in Christ, actually took our punishment on himself.

The biblical theology of propitiation is important to understand because in it, God himself propitiates his wrath by his own action.<sup>8</sup> This contrasts with ATR where humans propitiate or placate the spirits themselves by making sacrifices or by performing ablutions or rituals.<sup>9</sup> In any works-based theology one's service to God placates his wrath. But in a correct

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5. J. I. Packer, *Knowing God* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2021), 181.

6. Packer, *Knowing God*, 189.

7. *Illustrated Bible Dictionary and Treasury of Biblical History, Biography, Geography, Doctrine, and Literature*, s.v. "Atonement."

8. Packer, *Knowing God*, 179-81.

9. Elizabeth Mburu writes: "In the African worldview, intermediaries such as priests and a sacrificial system were key features of the religious system God put in place for his people. Sacrifices were offered only by particular people and served many purposes – to cleanse, to seek forgiveness, to seal a contract (particularly between God and an individual) and so forth." This system means that Africans may be more comfortable with the Old Testament religion than with the new. Mburu continues: "There is . . . a crucial difference between the biblical and the African worldview regarding the need for sacrifices. In the New Testament, a once-for-all sacrifice is provided in Jesus Christ. Consequently, approaching God personally is possible through his work of mediation." Mburu, *African Hermeneutics*, 38-39.

understanding of the atonement means that no sacrifice or contribution from us can in any way change our situation because Christ was sacrificed once for all.

The biblical view of reconciliation and the atonement is the basis for any biblical preaching because it undergirds all else, living for God or self, teaching on sin and sickness, faith and healing, blessing and suffering, life and death, eternal life and damnation. Reading the Bible for God's intent, since it includes reconciliation and the atonement, makes the difference between truth and error. For those in Nigeria, the truth offers abundant and eternal life and the promise of a relationship with the King of heaven.

### **Reconciliation is About Relationship Not Transaction**

Reconciliation to God is the result of the atonement and is central to how we live in relationship with God. It is central to the message of the Bible. Whether we are preachers, teachers, evangelists, friends, or family members, we have heard from Paul (see Chapter Three) that believers are called by God to proclaim reconciliation to all; this news is the good news that God wants to be in relationship (2 Cor 5:17–21) with his people. The Greek word for reconciliation here is καταλλάσσω (*katalasso*) which means the exchange of hostility for a friendly relationship (Rom 5:6-11; 11:15; 2 Cor 5:18-21; Eph 2:11-22; Col 1:15-23).<sup>10</sup>

The idea of a loving mutual relationship with God differs from a transactional view which focuses on things we must do to gain blessing or safety. But Kenyan theologian and

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10. *Dictionary Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*.

professor of New Testament and Greek, Elizabeth Mburu in her book, *African Hermeneutics*, explained that “African interactions with the Supreme Being are transactional as opposed to relational. There was a belief that if one lived wisely in the present, one would reap positive benefits in the future. On the other hand, unwise living resulted in certain punishment.”<sup>11</sup>

Richard Gehman, in his book, *African Traditional Religion in Biblical Perspective* said, “worship of God was utilitarian, seeking God for the help they might receive, rather than extolling the greatness and goodness of God.”<sup>12</sup> ATR therefore focuses on human needs and desires rather than worship of God. Unfortunately, this makes the prosperity gospel a perfect fit in Africa as it presents a familiar way of relating to God as a transaction.<sup>13</sup> But Marius Nel notes the irony of this transactional view for believers in a poor continent like Africa: “with a majority of people suffering from one form of poverty or another. To proclaim that poverty is a curse and a visitation for one’s sins should be seen as a criminal offence because it plunges poor people into an abyss of hopelessness.”<sup>14</sup>

So, because of this cultural understanding of religion as transaction rather than relationship, it is important for preachers in Nigeria to understand that God’s overarching purpose is to bring us back into his family as his children. Our reconciliation does not mean that we are guaranteed wealth or health. It means rather that we are no longer strangers but heirs

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11. The African perspective regarding a transactional relationship with God is very reminiscent of the Old Testament theology of blessings and cursings that Moses taught in Deut 28:1, 15, 58, 63. Richard J. Gehman, *African Traditional Religion in Biblical Perspective* (Kijabe, Kenya: Kesho Publication, 1989), 193; Mburu, *African Hermeneutics*, 38.

12. Mburu, *African Hermeneutics*, 38.

13. Mburu, *African Hermeneutics*, 38.

14. Nel, *The Prosperity Gospel in Africa*, Location 4475.

of God; sons and daughters of the living God (Rom 8:14). We live as adopted children who can cry out, “Abba! Father!” rather than living in fear of God.<sup>15</sup> We do not need a priest nor prophet to negotiate with our heavenly Father for us. That is the attitude we should commend to believers everywhere. We are well-loved children! (Rom 8:14-16; Gal 4:6). We are now not only heirs of God’s kingdom, but joint heirs with our brother Jesus Christ (Rom 8:17).

The believer has a new close and intimate relationship with God, not a transactional one whereby we must do certain things to win God’s favor. All this is because God has already done the work, he provided for this reconciliation through one final supreme sacrifice of his only Son (Isa 59:1-3; Gal 4:4-6; Eph 2:4-5; Col 1:13-14; 1 John 4:10).

We do need to make clear that this relationship is not free, indeed there was a transaction, but the cost was all on Christ’s side.

But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption. For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer, sanctify for the purification of the flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God. (Hebrews 9:11–14)

This sacrifice of God’s own son reconciled us all to “God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility (Eph 2:16). The atonement changed both our disposition to God and his disposition towards us: “For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. More

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<sup>15</sup> The *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* explains that Jesus himself probably used *abbá* for God not only in Mark 14:36 but also whenever the Greek word *patér*, or father, occurs. *Abba* denotes childlike intimacy and trust, not disrespect. When Paul uses *Abba* in Rom 8:15 and Gal 4:6, it may be a reminiscence of the opening of the Lord’s Prayer. *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Abridged in One Volume*, s.v. “ἁββᾶ.”

than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation” (Rom 5:10–11).<sup>16</sup> This reconciliation results in our becoming new creations by the power of Christ’s atonement

### Life Blood and the Atonement

Blood plays a key role in the atonement and our reconciliation. The writer of Hebrews tells us, “When Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come . . . he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption. (Heb 9:11–12 See also Rom 3:23–25a; 5:9; Eph 1:7; 2:13; Col 1:20; Rev 5:9)

The blood of Christ was the price of our ransom! However, we must be clear: biblically “blood” doesn’t refer to red and white blood cells and liquid plasma, it refers instead to the life of something or someone. “For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it for you on the altar to make atonement for your souls, for it is the blood that makes atonement by the life” (Lev 17:11). Blood is a dramatic metaphor for a life given as substitute. When we speak of blood in an Old Testament sacrifice it refers to the “principle of substitution” because it is the animal life that is taking the place of human life.<sup>17</sup>

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16. Eph 2:12–17 makes clear that this reconciliation also brought Gentile believers into communion with God’s chosen people of Israel. This passage speaks to restoration of peace from hostility that exists between believers as well as that between repentant humans and God.

17. Thomas R. Schreiner, “Penal Substitution View,” in *The Nature of the Atonement: Four Views*, ed. James K. Beilby and Paul R. Eddy, *Spectrum Multiview Books* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006), 85. 85.

Samuel Waje Kunhiyop, the head of the Postgraduate School at South African Theological Seminary, warns in his book, *African Theology*, that the idea of Christ's blood has been misconstrued in ATR:

The use of blood in rituals is common in many religions, dating back to the days before Moses. In African Traditional Religion it is used for ritual purposes such as cleansing, purification, atonement, initiation, and protection. Sins such as adultery, fornication, revealing the secrets of the gods or insulting parents require blood sacrifices to appease the gods. Diviners and native doctors also use blood to protect their patients against evil spirits. Thus, when Africans are converted to Christianity, they come prepared to read a certain set of meanings into "the blood of Jesus", seeing it as a potent weapon in their new-found faith.<sup>18</sup>

Kunhiyop adds:

The idea that the blood of Christ is protective derives more from an African approach to blood sacrifices than it does from the Scriptures: Such false ideas entrap innocent and gullible Christian people into false faith, into the deification of the blood of Christ, into occultic forms of magical fetishes such as "pleading the blood" or "sprinkling the blood" by repeating verbal mantras. Such concepts and procedures relegate important biblical truth to the realm of "hocus-pocus" and constitute what Paul would call "a gospel other than the one we preached to you" which is not gospel at all (Gal 1:8)!<sup>19</sup>

In Nigeria, Christ's blood is considered very powerful, but not only powerful for salvation, also powerful for good luck.<sup>20</sup> People are taught to call on Christ's blood, as a mantra,

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18. Samuel Waje Kunhiyop, *African Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2012), 125.

19. James A. Fowler, "The Blood of Christ," *ChristInYou.net* (1999): 11, accessed Feb. 2, 1922. In Kunhiyop, *African Christian Theology*, 128.

20. For example, some preaching aims to help people to gain power, not just over Satan but seemingly over God himself and they ironically base this on the power of Christ's own blood. Samuel Waje Kunhiyop writes, "Linked to the belief in the power of spoken words to bring a blessing or a curse on someone is the idea that invoking the name of a god will bring about a desired outcome. Before their conversion, many Africans were accustomed to invoking the names of deities and ancestral spirits to resolve particular problems. Once converted, they tend to carry on the practice, simply substituting concepts like "the blood of Jesus" and "the name of Jesus". " Kunhiyop, *African Christian Theology*, 124-25.

for all manner of blessings.<sup>21</sup> Calling on the blood of Christ or the name of Christ in order to get God to do things is patently unbiblical.

### New Creations Still Get Sick and Suffer

The result of our changed relationship, the cessation of the hostility between God and humankind is new life. The question remains what that means in a practical sense for the believer. The Bible says that those who are reconciled become new creations, renewed creatures (Rom 6:4; 2 Cor 5:17; Gal 6:15; Eph 4:17–24). Reconciliation places us positionally “in” Christ. Paul explained in our key passage, “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come” (2 Cor 5:17). Though sin is still a problem for the believer (Rom 7:22–23; 1 John 1:8–10), the gospel promise is, “There is . . . now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free

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21. For example, in David Oyedepo, renown Nigerian pastor’s book, *The Blood Triumph*, relates the following anecdotes of people who called on the blood of Jesus, not for forgiveness of sin, but for blessings in the here and now: “TESTIMONIES OF VICTORY BY THE BLOOD \* ‘My baby was born breech. Every effort made to make him cry, after his birth, was fruitless. Then I remembered Bishop David Oyedepo once said that when we are face to face with the devil, we should show him the receipt of our redemption, which is the Blood of Jesus. So, I started pleading the blood of Jesus over the baby. To the glory of God, the child started crying, after having been so still for two hours.’ - Sis. R. O. \* ‘I wrote my final bar exam and was expecting a good result. But when the results came out, I had a resit in one of the papers. I was stunned! When I was told, at the school, I stepped aside to a corner and I began to plead the Blood of Jesus. Not long after that, the same woman (a staff of the college) who broke the news to me, came running to me and told me that on going through the list of results, before it was to be published in the Newspapers, the Chairman of the Council of Legal Education said, ‘How come? This person did well in four papers, what could have happened in the fifth one?’ He than asked for my script, conducted an on-the-spot reassessment and gave me a pass mark!’ - Bro. A. D. \* ‘The Bishop instructed that throughout the week, every word we speak should be backed-up by the blood of Jesus. This morning, I was the first person in my office. While opening the place, I said ‘God, I open this place by the blood of Jesus.’ We had some chemicals we had been unable to sell for some time. So, I anointed them and said, ‘I prophesy speedy sales by the blood of Jesus.’ Barely four hours later, some people came in and bought-up all the chemicals at the exact amount we told them to pay!’ - Bro. I. P.” David Oyedepo, *The Blood Triumph* (Lagos, Nigeria: Dominion Publishing House, 1985), Location 412-26, PDF.

in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death” (Rom 8:1–2). Through the power of the Holy Spirit and God’s Word in us we have power to battle sin (Eph 6:10-18). Peter wrote about this change, “He [Christ] himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds we have been healed” (1 Pet 2:24). His wounds healed our sinful souls and made them new.

But this last verse, “by his wounds we have been healed,” has been misconstrued by prosperity gospel as meaning that Christ’s suffering on the cross promises physical healing for believers.<sup>22</sup> Or more properly, they believe that Jesus’s spiritual death, not physical death, provides for freedom from illness, which they see as a spiritual problem. Though of course God can literally heal our diseases, Peter is using a metaphor here for spiritual healing for those who are set free from sin.

The prosperity gospel even uses our key verse to promote the idea that believers have the “right” to physical wholeness. 2 Corinthians 5:17-21: Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation . . . For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. (2 Cor 5:17–21) E. W. Kenyon wrote regarding this passage: “Sickness is a spiritual condition manifested in the physical body. If He was made sin, and if He put our sin away, we need not be ruled by it. If He was made sick with our sickness, and if He put our diseases away, we need not be ruled by sickness and disease. We, with our diseases

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22. The title of Hagin’s book *Healing Belongs to Us* (Kenneth Hagin, *Healing Belongs to Us* (Tulsa: Faith Library, 1977), 16, 17) is also the title of a key chapter in Kenyon’s book, (*Jesus the Healer*.) On the basis of passages such as Isa 53:5, Matt 8:17, and 1 Pet 2:24 Kenyon and Hagin insist that Christ has provided complete physical healing from all sickness. But unlike classical Pentecostals, who also refer to those passages regarding healing, the Faith teachers believe that diseases are healed by Christ’s spiritual atonement in hell. D.R. McConnell, *A Different Gospel*, Updated Edition ed. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2011), 142.

and sicknesses, were nailed to the cross in Christ.”<sup>23</sup> D.R. McConnel explains, “The doctrine of healing in the Faith theology is based on its [faulty] understanding of the atonement of Christ. In the Faith theology, the purpose of the atonement is as much to provide you with the right to good health and prosperity as it is the forgiveness of sin.”<sup>24</sup> Because they believe all sickness to be a spiritual, rather than a physical problem, the atonement and salvation should cleanse you from all illness,

Comparing the prosperity gospel’s view of faith as having the power to reverse the effects of the Fall to the African traditional view, we note that ATR sees sickness and poverty, not as a result of lack of faith but as a result of the attacks of evil spirits. And in a sense, there is truth to the ATR view considering Satan’s sneak attack on Adam and Eve in the garden (Gen 3) which ultimately brought the Fall including physical sickness. Samuel Waje Kunhiyop also reminds us that some parts of the idea that sickness comes from spiritual attack are correct, though not all: “While it is true that some diseases and mental states can be caused by demonic activity (Luke 13:32), this is not true in every case. In Matthew 4:24, for example, a distinction is drawn between epilepsy and demon possession, which can cause similar symptoms (see Matt 17:15–18). It is thus wrong to claim that all diseases are attributable to demons.”<sup>25</sup>

However, clearly much of our sickness is a result of living in this fallen world (Gen 3:19b). No amount of faith in ourself or positive thinking will change that. Our personal sins and

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23. E.W. Kenyon, *Identification: A Romance in Redemption* (Kenyon’s Gospel Publishing Society, 2012), 136.

24. McConnell, *A Different Gospel*, 142.

25. Kunhiyop, *African Christian Theology*, 57-58.

the sins of others all contribute to our lack of health and suffering, especially as a result of our disrespect of creation. Jesus also taught that sickness is sometimes something that God caused in order to reveal his power to heal (John 9:1–4; 11:4). For example, Paul understood that his sickness, which he considered an attack on his body from Satan, was something which allowed God’s power to be more evident in him (2 Cor 12:7–10). But Jesus promised: “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” It is possible to see through these passages that all suffering is not spiritual or at odds with God’s will for us.

In the traditional African context, suffering was thought to indicate that community relationships had broken down somewhere; if you offended the community you automatically offended the supreme being.<sup>26</sup> Natural disasters were regarded as punishment by the supreme being and required the offering of sacrifices to appease him and thus to end the flooding or drought or whatever.<sup>27</sup> Old Testament views regarding blessings and cursings are reminiscent of Africans’ traditional understandings and Africans naturally resonate with retribution theology of the Old Testament.<sup>28</sup>

But in the prosperity gospel, it is not the evil spirits or a sinful lifestyle that are to blame for suffering, but a lack of faith. Marius Nel says, “The blame [for suffering] is placed squarely

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26. Mburu, *African Hermeneutics*, 61.

27. Mburu, *African Hermeneutics*, 61.

28. Andrew Hill and John Walton explain, “The idea of divine retribution based on the merits (or demerits) of human behavior is a common theme in the poetic and wisdom literature of the Old Testament. The retribution principle is rooted in the blessings and curses of the Mosaic covenant (Deut. 28). The rewards or punishments appended to the legislation of Yahweh’s pact with Israel stipulate that obedience to the commands of God will bring divine blessing, whereas disobedience to the Lord’s statutes will send the curses of Yahweh upon the Hebrews. This fundamental teaching of Old Testament theology is examined from four complementary perspectives in the following chapters (Job, Psalms, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes).” John H. Walton and Andrew E. Hill, *A Survey of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 395-96. Mburu, *African Hermeneutics*, 61.

on the shoulders of the believer, explaining the guilt complexes that many prosperity believers suffer from.”<sup>29</sup> It places the blame for a lack of answered prayer squarely back on the person praying. “Thankfully,” Kenneth Hagin revealed four steps that he promised could guarantee answered prayer: 1) Say it. 2) Do it. 3) Receive it. And 4) Tell it.<sup>30</sup> Marius Nell would retort, “If the supposed answers to prayers [of prosperity gospel preachers] sound magical, it is [because they are] nothing but magic. It is human presumption trying to force God’s hand.”<sup>31</sup>

### The Prosperity Gospel on Jesus’ Death, Biblical Inspiration, and the Believer’s “Rights”

The prosperity gospel view of Jesus’s death on the cross involves, not one, but two deaths, a spiritual and a physical. It was the spiritual death that provides for freedom from sickness and sin because they are both considered spiritual problems. They teach that Christ’s spiritual death meant that he suffered in hell (not on the cross) as a substitute for you and me. It was Jesus’s resurrection from hell (they say he was born again out of hell) that provided redemption and made him divine.<sup>32</sup> The reason that prosperity teachers give for the Apostles not knowing about this, and thus it’s absence from the Bible, is that Matthew, Mark, Luke, and

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29. Nel, *The Prosperity Gospel in Africa*, 124.

30. Hagin, *Four Steps to Answered Prayer* (Tulsa: Faith Library, 1980), 7. In McConnell, *A Different Gospel*, 139.

31. Nel, *The Prosperity Gospel in Africa*, Location 6308.

32. D.R. McConnell explains that, “Faith theology uses cultic, metaphysical concepts. This results in a heretical doctrine of Identification, which denies the physical nature of the atonement, asserts that Christ became a demoniac and was “born-again” in hell, and teaches that believers can be transformed into incarnations of God (=deification).” It is in this way that they claim believers are incarnations of God. McConnell, *A Different Gospel*, 112-13.

John were only privy to earthly “sense” knowledge, unlike E. W. Kenyon and Kenneth Copeland.<sup>33</sup> First, this seems to deny the fact the Bible, the Gospels were inspired by God and assumes that some current day believers are. Marius Nel reminds us also that this teaching actually denies inspired scripture. But most importantly, the “spiritual death” principal denies the very core of the gospel, Christ’s real and propitiatory death for us.<sup>34</sup> It is based on the heresy that Jesus left his divine nature in heaven when he came to earth and had to suffer in hell to regain it, not only for himself but for us. In this way Christ is denigrated but humans are transformed into gods themselves.<sup>35</sup>

Furthermore and very simply, a theology that teaches that illness is nullified as a result of the cross ignores that, Paul left Trophimus sick (2 Tim 4:20) and recommended Timothy use a little wine for his stomach’s sake (1 Tim 5:23). It forgets that Paul prayed three times without receiving an answer regarding his thorn in the flesh. Paul eventually understood his “thorn” to be a necessary part of God’s will for him, something which would keep him from becoming too elated about the many revelations he had received (1 Cor 12:7–9).<sup>36</sup> And it maligns the suffering of many godly and faith-filled believers down through the millennia, who like Paul went hungry and suffered persecution as he followed Christ and taught the gospel.<sup>37</sup>

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33. Nel, *The Prosperity Gospel in Africa*, Location 5939-61. See “What the Holy Spirit Doesn’t Offer” below at footnote 87.

34. Nel, *The Prosperity Gospel in Africa*, Location 5959.

35. Nel, *The Prosperity Gospel in Africa*, Location 5939-61. Hanegraaff, *Christianity In Crisis: The 21st Century*. McConnell, *A Different Gospel*, 112-25. See also E. W. Kenyon, *What Happened from the Cross to the Throne* (United States: Kenyon’s Gospel Publishing Society, 1946).

36. Nel, *The Prosperity Gospel in Africa*, Location 6290.

37. But John writes in Revelation that when the fifth seal is opened, “I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne. They cried out with a loud

Accepting Christ, being “in” Christ, means that we identify with Christ in his suffering (Phil 3:10). In some sense, our suffering helps us understand Christ’s suffering. The atonement and being new creations does not mean a cessation of suffering but Christ on our side in it. He “comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. For as we share abundantly in Christ’s sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too” (2 Cor 1:3–5). This is a truth of the gospel.

Being “in” Christ, identifying with Christ as new creations means that instead of God giving us what we want according to some supposed “right” as prosperity theology preaches, we allow our personal rights to be subsumed into Christ’s will as we have become one with Him (1 John 3:6-9).<sup>38</sup> Prosperity gospel theology considers health, wealth, and an end to suffering to be the right and privilege of believers in Christ. This idea makes light of God’s sovereignty and reverses the Christian paradigm of our being “in” Christ’s will to Christ being forced to serve our will.<sup>39</sup>

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voice, “O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?” Rev 6:9-10. Was John’s vision of the special place held for the martyrs who suffered for their witness to Christ also a mistake? At this point we must say that those who hold the view, that Christians are not meant to suffer or face persecution or tribulation, are more imaginative than biblical.

38. I have just spoken of our rights as children of God, and that is what believers are. But E.W. Kenyon means something more. He means our rights as supposed “divine beings.” He wrote: “You know what John 15:7 means: “If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatsoever ye will, and it shall be done unto you.” You know you do abide in Him. You bear the fruitage of His indwelling Word. His Word in your lips produce real results. The Father’s Word in Jesus lips healed the sick. His Word in your lips does the same. You know what it means to have legal rights, and whatever you demand He gives you. The word “demand” is used in its truest sense. John 16:23-24 Jesus said, “In that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, If ye shall ask anything of the Father, He will give it to you in my name.” The word “ask” means “demand.” Kenyon, *Identification: A Romance in Redemption*, 626. See also Locations 186, 249, 428-438.

39. J. Nico Horn, *From Rags to Riches: An Analysis of the Faith Movement and its Relation to the Classical Pentecostal Movement* (Pretoria: University of South Africa, 1989), 95. Walter Hollenweger, “From Azusa Street to Toronto Phenomenon: Historical Roots of Pentecostalism,” *Concilium* 3.6 (1993): 311. In Nel, *The Prosperity Gospel in Africa*, 131.

The atonement means that we are set free, but not free from suffering, free from sin “But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life” (Rom 6:22). As far as it is true that much of our suffering is due to our own sin, then of course to some extent we can be set free from the ramifications of that if we stop sinning. But much of our suffering is due to the sins of others and the Fall and from that, we are not promised freedom. The freedom we experience in Christ is paradoxically freedom to honor others, love our fellow believers, respect God, care for creation, and the freedom to honor those in governmental power (1 Pet 2:16–17). These are the “rights” the Bible actually promises for those he set free from sin. These “freedoms” bring us to God’s mutual work with us in sanctification.

### Sanctification

The process of sanctification is a fruit of our reconciliation. It is both the process and result of our salvation.<sup>40</sup> Sanctification is part of God’s redemptive work in which both human and God participate (1 Thess 5:23; 2 Thess. 2:13; 1 Pet. 1:22).<sup>41</sup> It is a work of the Holy Spirit in our lives. The word we translate as sanctification is ἁγιασμός (*hagiasmós*) is literally “the state of being made holy (1 Thess 5:23; 2 Thess 2:13; 1 Pet 1:22).” Charismatic Calvinist theologian Wayne Grudem explains, “God works in our sanctification, and we work as well, and we work

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40. Here I present a simple view of sanctification knowing that others, for example John Wesley and some Pentecostals believe in entire sanctification as a second working of grace.

41. Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 753.

for the same purpose. We are not saying that we have equal roles in sanctification or that we both work in the same way, but simply that we cooperate with God in ways that are appropriate to our status as God's creatures . . . God calls us to cooperate with him in this activity."<sup>42</sup>

Being reconciled to God causes us to want to live differently. A realization of Christ's great love, when it controls us, means we no longer want to live for ourselves but for him who died for us (2 Cor 5:14–15). Christ is our example of servant love on the cross (Matt 20:25–28; John 13:3–17; Rom 15:1–4; Eph 5:2; Phil 2:5–11; 1 Pet 2:21–25; 1 John 3:16–18; 4:10–11). This is the working out of our salvation, our sanctification.

Sanctification includes our dedication to the interests of God, being consecrated to God's purposes (Rom 6:17–23). It is the proper result of Christ's atoning work in the believer (1 Pet 1:14–19). Paul says, "I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect" (Rom 12:1–2).

Reconciliation initiates and sanctification continues our development towards the *imago dei* (Eph 4:20–24; Col 3:9–10). Though the Holy Spirit works along with us to mature and strengthen us, the process is not complete until we enter heaven (Gal 5:16–26; 1 John 3:2). Until then we are in the process of being transformed into Christ's likeness but are not quite there (Rom 8:29; 1 Cor 15:49; 2 Cor 3:18).

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42. Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 753.

Being sanctified, according to the prosperity gospel is not a process or a second act of grace but our legal right fully completed at our salvation.<sup>43</sup> The prosperity gospel teaches not that we should become like Christ through sanctification but rather that Christ became like us when he took on our sins at the cross and went to hell, they say, to pay the price for them. The results of this, they believe, is that the believer is a sinless creature, completely sanctified at new birth.<sup>44</sup> Kenneth Hagin called this “Identification with Christ.” He meant this exchange wherein Christ identified with us by taking on our sin when he hung on the cross. Jesus took on our sin, so it goes, so that “man becomes an incarnation of God.”<sup>45</sup> This teaching goes opposite of the teaching of Paul and John, most clearly against 1 John 1:10 “If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.”<sup>46</sup>

### **Reconciliation Requires Atonement of the Cross**

The prosperity gospel view of the atonement is rooted in the limited Christus Victor view of the atonement.<sup>47</sup> This view is based in the idea that when Adam and Eve sinned in the

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43. E. W. Kenyon, *Identification: A Romance in Redemption* (Seattle, WA: Kenyon’s Gospel Publishing Society, 1968), 16, 205, 330.

44. Nel, *The Prosperity Gospel in Africa*, 137.

45. Nel, *The Prosperity Gospel in Africa*, 136-38.

46. See also Rom 7:23.

47. According to Paul Eddy and James Beilby the “ransom theory” of the atonement is: “(1) Satan gained mastery over humanity when the first couple chose the path of sin in the garden. Satan retains this hold on humanity through the powers of the kingdom of darkness (sin, fear, death, etc.). (2) Through death, Jesus’ innocent life became the ransom price that was acceptable to Satan for the liberation/redemption of humanity. The New Testament passage often used to support this idea came from the very lips of Jesus: “The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Mt 20:28; Mk 10:45; cf. 1 Tim 2:6). (3) Finally, the ransom theory typically emphasizes that Christ’s victory was achieved by outwitting the devil. The

garden, Satan was given a legal right over humanity and over all creation. This right over creation, according to this view, continued from the time of the Fall to Christ's resurrection. All this time, they claim, Satan was in charge of the world.<sup>48</sup> It is Satan then who we must be bought back from, since he, in this view, is our rightful owner.

But Scripture, on the other hand makes clear that our sin is against God and it ultimately leads to death (Gen 39:9; Lev 6:2; Ps 51:4; Ezek 18:4; John 3:16; 10:28; Rom 3:23). Legally, God is the injured party because he is the creator, he is the just and holy God, our sin is against him.<sup>49</sup> But as Kenyon describes it, when Christ took our sins upon himself on the cross, he was cast into hell and under Satan's control for a time until he won the battle to ransom us from

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inherent injustice of taking an innocent life as a ransom is the basis on which Christ defeats Satan (a notion tied to the words of Paul in 1 Cor 2:8)."

Among the more notable exponents of some version of the ransom theory are Irenaeus (at least in its embryonic form), Origen (the first to explicate the theory in any kind of detail), Gregory of Nyssa, Gregory the Great and Rufinus. Paul R. Eddy and James Beilby, "The Atonement: An Introduction," in *The Nature of the Atonement: Four Views*, ed. Paul R. Eddy and James Beilby, *Spectrum Multiview Books* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006), 12-13.

48. This view is based in Eph 4:8-10 and 1 Peter 3:18-20 but ignores "For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit, (1 Peter 3:18)."

49. I agree with Schreiner who writes: "I would maintain . . . that the root problem in the human condition is human sin, and penal substitution [theory of the atonement] grounds our redemption, illumination, freedom, forgiveness, victory over demonic powers, moral life, and so forth." In Africa, the root problem however is seen to be the spirit world's power over everything on earth.

Schreiner continues: "In some ways Joel Green's thesis [of a Kaleidoscope joining all the views of the Atonement] is the easiest to defend, for he is surely right that the significance of the atonement is multifaceted, and including only one theme cannot do justice to the richness of what God has accomplished in Christ." Thomas R. Schreiner, "Penal Substitution Response to Kaleidoscope View," in *The Nature of the Atonement: Four Views*, ed. Paul R. Eddy and James Beilby, *Spectrum Multiview Books* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006), 192-93.

Satan.<sup>50</sup> Jesus was our ransom and substitute, they say, but not on the cross, in hell.<sup>51</sup> Fred Price notoriously wrote:

Do you think that the punishment for our sin was to die on a cross? If that were the case, the two thieves could have paid your price. No, the punishment was to go into hell itself and to serve time in hell separated from God . . . Satan and all the demons of hell thought that they had Him bound and they threw a net over Jesus and they dragged Him down to the very pit of hell itself to serve our sentence.<sup>52</sup>

This is a Satan focused view of the atonement however, and not a God focused view.

But some would argue that with the strong emphasis in ATR on evil spirits, this motif of the atonement as mainly or only a victory over Satan provides an effective point of introduction to the doctrine of atonement. In fact, missiologist Jason Georges, in an effort at being culturally relevant in missions towards the African and what he terms “fear-based” contexts, even recommends discarding the reformation penal substitution view of the atonement to follow this ransom theory in order to evangelize in “fear-based cultures.” He writes, “God could not simply steal us back, for that would be resorting to the enemy’s treacherous ways. A transaction must take place for Satan to release his authority over humans. The price was Jesus, who gave his life [to Satan] as a ransom (to pay Satan to give us back) for humanity (Mark 10:45).”<sup>53</sup>

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50. McConnell, *A Different Gospel*, 121.

51. Kenneth E. Hagin, *The Believer's Authority* (Tulsa, Oklahoma: Faith Library Publications, 1967, 2014), 19.

52. Frederick K.C. Price, *Ever Increasing Faith Messenger*, June, 1980. Quoted in McConnell, *A Different Gospel*, 114.

53. Jayson Georges, *The 3D Gospel: Ministry in Guilt, Shame, and Fear Cultures* (Timē Press, 2017), 48.

But African theologian, Abraham O. Adebo, from the University of Ibadan Nigeria, argues that sin, in the African traditional religion worldview, is a struggle with cosmic powers and therefore continual sacrifices to ancestors and gods are needed for victory over it. “They [proponents of ATR] are therefore continually involved in rituals and sacrifices to these gods and ancestors. The realization that Christ died on the cross on their behalf to put an end to such sacrifices and above all to secure victory over the cosmic oppressive powers will be profitable for mass evangelization and the spreading of the gospel.”<sup>54</sup> Nigerian Christians need only to be taught the full truth of the atonement not a different culturally “in tune” gospel.

John quotes John the Baptist the day he saw Jesus, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29). The “ransom theory” of the atonement, even if it were clearly spelled out somewhere in the Bible, would still only contain part of the picture view of the atonement. The larger and clearly the main principal of Christ’s death is not the limited to the defeat Satan but fully embraces the forgiveness of sins (Matt 26:28). Thomas Schreiner, an advocate for the Penal Substitution Theory of the Atonement agrees: “The proclamation of the Baptist and Jesus has antecedents in Old Testament sacrifices that were given to provide forgiveness of sins. The primacy of forgiveness is fleshed out in the early apostolic preaching where people are summoned to repentance (e.g., Acts 2:38; 3:19; 5:31; 10:43; 13:38). Furthermore, it is quite clear in Paul (cf. Rom 1:18–3:26; Gal 3:10–13; 2 Cor 5:21), the author of

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<sup>54</sup> Abraham O. Adebo, “Anselm’s Theory of the Atonement and Its Implications for Salvation in African Traditional Religions,” *Asian Journal of Social Sciences & Humanities* 52, no. May, 2 (2016): 17.

Hebrews (Heb 7:11–10:25), John (1 Jn 1:7–2:2; 2:12; 4:10), and Peter (1 Pet 2:21–24; 3:18; 2 Pet 1:9) that forgiveness of sins is fundamental [to the purpose of the atonement].”<sup>55</sup>

Giving people who already live in fear of spiritual battles only partial truth is not the answer for preachers who want to be ambassadors of reconciliation to God. We should show preachers how to read and understand the Bible according to its larger contexts not continuing to focus on limited and faulty readings simply because they can syncretize with African cultural perspectives. Planting faith on rotten roots is always a bad idea, even as it may initially appeal to culture.

Millard Erickson offers the truth as a counter:

If Christ’s death . . . had been nothing more than the payment of a ransom to Satan, the law would not have been fulfilled in the process and Satan would not have been defeated. It was not the payment of a ransom to Satan that ensured his defeat and the triumph of God, but Christ’s taking our place to free us from the curse of the law. By bearing the penalty of our sin and thus satisfying once and for all the just requirements of the law, Christ nullified Satan’s control over us at its root—the power to bring us under the curse and condemnation of the law. Christ’s death, then, was indeed God’s triumph over the forces of evil, but only because it was a substitutionary sacrifice.<sup>56</sup>

### The Truth About Prosperity Gospel Roots

The prosperity gospel was originally an American movement which has its origin in New Thought, a nineteenth-century spiritual movement popular with the likes of Ralph Waldo

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55. Thomas R. Schreiner, “Penal Substitution Response to Christus Victor View,” in *The Nature of the Atonement: Four Views*, ed. Paul R. Eddy James K. Beilby, *Spectrum Multiview Books* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006), 50-51.

56. Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), 751.

Emerson and William James.<sup>57</sup> It is not rooted in Christianity or Scripture at all but uses Scripture, taken out of context, to support its points. The prosperity gospel grows out of an underlying belief that human beings are divine and that they can be taught to tap into this power. The upshot in America was the idea that individuals are responsible for their own happiness, health, and life situation by applying mental energy.<sup>58</sup> It sounds a lot like faith and has come to heavily influence Christianity. But faith in this case is placed in oneself not the Lord Jesus Christ.

In the prosperity gospel, rather than training in holiness and truth, the preacher's role is that of life coach and cheer leader whose job is to build up listeners with the power of positive thinking and to help them tap into their own power. Nell writes, "The [prosperity] gospel is not primarily about the restoration of humans relationship with God [reconciliation] that was disturbed because of our sin; now all attention is taken up by an interest in daily life and its betterment in the here and now."<sup>59</sup>

### Prosperity Gospel Feeds African Traditional Religious Belief

On the other hand, when things don't go as the prosperity gospel claims, when sickness and problems come, Christians with one foot still in ATR seek a "prophet" to help them defeat the evil spiritual powers. This is not the kind of prophet we spoke of in the last chapter,

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57. Tara Isabella Burton, "The Prosperity Gospel, Explained: Why Joel Osteen Believes That Prayer Can Make You Rich," *Vox* (Sept. 1, 2017), accessed Feb. 11, 2022.

58. Burton, "The Prosperity Gospel, Explained: Why Joel Osteen Believes That Prayer Can Make You Rich."

59. Nel, *The Prosperity Gospel in Africa*, 141.

someone with the gift of prophecy. This is rather a “Man of God” or “Woman of God” who claims special abilities to defeat Satan and evil spirits. This prophet may be a pastor or a paid specialist in spiritual power who claims the ability to help.<sup>60</sup> In some cases, there is a fee for these services or the person seeking help must buy blessed water, anointed oil, or something else like a Bible or handkerchief blessed by the prophet.<sup>61</sup> These prophets stand in for the old witch doctor in ATR. Nell writes: “In this way, African neo-pentecostal prophetism successfully contextualizes their version of the gospel to African traditional religion and the prophet becomes a current substitute for the traditional African offices of the diviners, fortune tellers, and witchdoctors.”<sup>62</sup>

It is clear that a form of Christianity which has its roots in either ATR or New Age thinking is counterfeit, because true Christianity is based on the Christian Bible. Building Nigerian Christianity on this inferior foundation is like building a house on the sand. It will collapse. Because of these types of problems in the burgeoning Christian church of Nigeria, preaching needs to be based in the Bible read for God’s intent through the author’s intent, not understood as a book from which to pluck verses which are then understood from the perspective of a foreign gospel rather than the intent of the inspired author.<sup>63</sup> Missional contextualization must never supersede Scripture’s clearest teaching.

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60. Nel, *The Prosperity Gospel in Africa*, Location 3961.

61. Nel, *The Prosperity Gospel in Africa*, Location 3961.

62. Nel, *The Prosperity Gospel in Africa*, Location 3961.

63. These counterfeit views are often so close to biblical Christianity that one cannot differentiate well between them. This is especially true because they are passed on by means of preaching on television or the internet or from books which are essentially inspirational sermons built on a faulty worldview. They are very good counterfeits but fake none the less.

## God's Love Provides Completely for Reconciliation

We know that reconciliation is not something we deserve, rather it is offered to us by God's grace. The common denominator in every aspect of reconciliation is the simple fact that reconciliation between God and humankind itself was initiated, accomplished, and continues today solely by God's will and because of his love. In other words, neither works based religion (transactional), animism (supernatural power attributed to a spirit world), nor the positive faith in faith of the prosperity gospel can contribute value to what God has already freely offered.<sup>64</sup>

We see this amazing love first in the Old Testament concept of steadfast love or *hesed* (hesed) which brings together both covenant keeping and unconditional love; righteousness and mercy, obedience, and blessing.<sup>65</sup> In God's *hesed* there is great love but there is also the expectation of loyalty and an obligation for both parties (Phil 1:6–11, 1 Thess 3:12; 2 Thess 1:3 Phlm 21; 1 Pet 1:13–19). There is a call for and expectation of faithfulness and obedience on the part of the one who is loved. Even with this expectation of obedience, the believer's burden is light (Matt 11:28–30) because true faith gives birth to obedience as one understands the debt paid on their behalf (Rom 1:5; 6:16–17; 15:18; 2 Cor 7:15; 10:3–6).

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64. Joel Osteen preaches, "Our words are vital in bringing our dreams to pass. It's not enough to simply see it by faith or in your imagination. You have to begin speaking words of faith over your life. Your words have enormous creative power. The moment you speak something out, you give birth to it. This is a spiritual principle, and it works whether what you are saying is good or bad, positive or negative." Joel Osteen, *Your Best Life Now: 7 Steps to Living at Your Full Potential* (New York: Warner Faith, 2004), 129. Hanegraaff, *Christianity In Crisis: The 21st Century*, 12.

Today American prosperity preachers such as Joyce Meyer, T.D. Jakes, Creflo Dollar, Joel Osteen, and Frederick Price are household names in Africa. Nel, *The Prosperity Gospel in Africa*, 47.

65. *hesed* (hesed) means steadfast love. In the Old Testament *hesed* is used 245 times. See for example Ex 34:4–7; Ps 136. For a more in-depth word study of *hesed* see, "A Sample Word Study" in Anderson, *Thoughtful Proclaimer*, 121–26.

A genuine result of understanding that Jesus paid our debt on the cross and offered us eternal salvation and the power of the Holy Spirit to overcome sin results in an obedient response, not because we have to but because we want to. But Elizabeth Mburu explains that many miss this idea of steadfast love and the free gift Christ offered. Because they are stuck in the transactional view of the Bible, they believe they have to “give to get.” In Africa they call this the “Law of Sowing and Reaping.” It is the underlying principle that is often used to call for donations at church.

One of the primary texts is: “Give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you.” (Luke 6:38) Mburu writes:

The traditional transactional understanding of our relationship with the Supreme Being has led many to interpret this verse as meaning that when you give monetary gifts, particularly in the form of tithes, offerings and gifts to the poor, God is obligated to bless you in return. We do not look for spiritual blessings but for financial rewards. The link to the prosperity gospel is clear. What we may fail to note is that interpreting the text this way leads us to give with the wrong motives – not because we love God and want to thank him for his faithfulness but because we want something back.<sup>66</sup>

A transactional view of giving to get ultimately leaves us presuming on God’s love and kindness because it leaves us feeling that God owes us something. There is no need for our grateful response to God. Ignoring Paul’s testimony, prosperity theology teaches that being poor indicates that a Christian has been defeated by Satan and is living outside of God’s will.<sup>67</sup> It

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66. Mburu, *African Hermeneutics*, 40-41.

67. Nel, *The Prosperity Gospel in Africa*, 124.

teaches that all believers should experience spiritual and material prosperity as an integral part of the atonement.<sup>68</sup>

What they claim is needed is to apply the “spiritual laws” and “principles” they find in the Bible. For example, we know Jesus’ promise, “give, and it will be given to you” (Luke 6:38) is clearly a truth of Scripture that God blesses those who are generous. But the prosperity gospel teaches “the law of one hundred-fold.” The “law of one hundred-fold” say that if you give one dollar, you will receive 100 back.<sup>69</sup> This comes from Genesis 26:12-13, “And Isaac sowed in that land and reaped in the same year a hundredfold. The LORD blessed him, and the man became rich, and gained more and more until he became very wealthy.”

Interestingly, Kenneth Copeland explained that when Jesus told the rich young ruler to give away all his money to the poor in Mark 10:17-31, he did so knowing that by giving away all his money the young man would receive back hundredfold and be fabulously wealthy!<sup>70</sup> Clearly this is an excellent teaching for prosperity preachers and churches looking to increase donations; they get rich while others get poor.

The Bible does speak much about abundant life; but according to Jesus (who promises us such blessing), abundant life does not consist in an abundance of possessions (Luke 2:15) or a guarantee of robust health (2 Cor 5:1–8; 12:7–10), but rather being pardoned and living in relationship with our heavenly Father (Ps 23:6; Isa 55; Rom 2:4-7). The New Testament talks

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68. Nel, *The Prosperity Gospel in Africa*, 121.

69. Nel, *The Prosperity Gospel in Africa*, 123.

70. Kenneth Copeland, *The Laws of Prosperity*. (Tulsa, OK: Harrison House Publishers, 2012), 66. In Nel, *The Prosperity Gospel in Africa*, 123.

much of abundance: abundant grace, abundant comfort, abundant love, abundant joy, abundant power, and abundant faith (Rom 5:17; 2 Cor 1:5; 2:4; 8:2; Eph 3:20; 2 Thess 1:3).

### Presuming on God's Kindness

God's faithful covenant love called *hesed* (הֶסֶד), in the Old Testament, is not only the basis of God's forgiveness but also of his anger (Ps 103).<sup>71</sup> God himself spoke these words to Moses: "The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love [*hesed*] and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love [*hesed*] for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation" (Ex 34:6–7).<sup>72</sup>

The importance of this theology for Nigeria is that this biblical view of God's love and Christ's sacrifice is based on God's justice. It not only convinces us of the truth of the gospel but also convicts us of our need for it. But the African view doesn't look to Jesus Christ for forgiveness. The ATR view is that if someone does something wrong it is due to the influence of spirits. In essence, when someone does something wrong they can say, "the Devil made me do

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71. *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, s.v. "698 תִּחַ."

72. Thomas Schreiner notes that Martin Hengel has written, "In other words, men no longer need to assuage the wrath of God through their actions. God as subject of the saving event, reconciled to himself his unfaithful creatures, who had become his enemies." Martin Hengel, *The Atonement: The Origins of the Doctrine in the New Testament*, trans. John Bowden (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981), 32. In Schreiner, "Penal Substitution Response to Kaleidoscope View," in *The Nature of the Atonement: Four Views*, 69.

it.” Sin and misfortune are blamed on the ancestors or the spirits. Nel writes regarding the common African view,

Even people who act in an evil way are not to be held responsible for their actions because [it is believed,] they are the victims of evil powers and persons, like witches and sorcerers, who envied and abused them. In this way, Africans do not accept responsibility for their own actions and its influence on their circumstances, like abuse of alcohol or drugs, but find convenient scapegoats that can be reproached and kept accountable for their own shortcomings, like bad habits, laziness or a lack of initiative.<sup>73</sup>

The sad news is, until we acknowledge our guilt before God and the debt we owe, we cannot truly accept God’s offer of pardon, and so we remain guilty. By shifting the blame to Satan for tricking us in the garden, for example, we are left without a sense of personal guilt and therefore without knowing we need repentance.<sup>74</sup> William Lane Craig points out, “Because it is Christ and not we who has discharged the sentence for our sins, our redemption is not accomplished unless and until we receive God’s pardon.”<sup>75</sup> This grasp of the cause and cost of the atonement, not just its results and benefits, is necessary for salvation. A realization of our guilt and the high cost of its forgiveness is the only thing that can prevent us from demanding things from God, and presuming on his mercy, and continuing in sin.

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73. Nel, *The Prosperity Gospel in Africa*, Location 3894-915.

74. Marius Nel explains that in African thinking, if we do something bad it is the evil spirits making us do it. “In traditional African thinking, nothing happens without a spiritual cause. One is helpless in the failures of this life, emphasizing the need to find a means to negotiate with the culprits, the evil spirits, and angry ancestors. People are not responsible for their actions; misfortunes always have some spiritual explanation . . . Drunkenness, social deviance, and abusive behavior are blamed on other powers than the individuals themselves, leaving them the opportunity to continue with their misconduct that is socially unacceptable and abusive. They are not held accountable for their behavior. This might also contribute to the way politicians’ misdeeds and corrupt acts are viewed by many Africans, leading them not to hold the leaders accountable for the damage they are causing to the African economy and social fabric, and voting again and again for political parties paralyzed by endemic corruption.” Nel, *The Prosperity Gospel in Africa*, Location 3894-915.

75. Craig, *Atonement and the Death of Christ*, 258.

In the true gospel a grasp of our guilt and the cost of forgiveness yields a grateful heart. This gratefulness causes us to want to focus on serving God and doing good deeds (Titus 3:8). The gospel is not a transaction and not meant to be a way for us to get something more, but rather, our grateful responses are a result of what God in Christ already did. Without a theology that recognizes God's anger at our sin and the need for repentance because of our guilt we are left presuming on his steadfast love. If our debt was to Satan, as the prosperity gospel and ransom theory of the atonement implies, then we have no motivation for serving God. In this case, the preacher is left preaching to fulfill lesser needs; for example, how to guarantee a larger paycheck.<sup>76</sup>

Regarding presuming on God's love, we note that in the New Testament, God's love is often referred to by the Greek word χρηστότης (*chrēstotēs*). *Chrestotes* is a word used to denote God's kindness, goodness, and gracious restraint. Paul uses this word to warn us against presuming on this love, "Note then the [*chrestotes*] and the severity of God: severity toward those who have fallen, but God's [*chrestotes*] to you, provided you continue in his [*chrestotes*]. Otherwise, you too will be cut off" (Rom 11:22).

We see in this that both God's kindness and his severe justice are strands of the same divine righteousness goodness.<sup>77</sup> *Chrestotes* speaks not only of God's kindness and mercy but also of God's expectations for his beloved. Paul asks, "Or do you presume on the riches of his

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76. Though in general, preachers who are otherwise advocates for the theology of Kenneth Hagin and its faulty concepts of faith and prosperity do not speak much about our sin or guilt, Gary Maxey notes that at least two of Nigeria's most well-known prosperity preachers, David Oyedepo and E. A. Adeboye, nevertheless are to be commended for being devout proponents of the need for holy living and the avoidance of sin. Maxey, *The Seduction of the Nigerian Church*, Location 26572.

77. *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, s.v. "χρηστότης."

kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?" (Rom 2:4) Reconciliation, since it is based in God's steadfast love, covers both God's call and our response.

The contrast is striking between the grace-filled loving attitude of God for us and the presumptive attitude towards God of which "Word of Faith" founder Kenneth Hagin teaches.

Kenneth Hagin writes,

Jesus made this statement in John 14: "And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do . . . If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it" (vv. 13–14). He's not talking about prayer. The Greek word here is "demand," not "ask." Hagin continues, "Whatever you demand as your rights and privileges. . . ." You've got to learn what your rights are.<sup>78</sup>

Fred Price,<sup>79</sup> American televangelist, author, and founding "apostle" of Crenshaw Christian Center was one of the more presumptuous. He called his theology, "Name It, Claim It." Referring to himself, Price once said, "That's the reason why I drive a Rolls Royce—I'm following Jesus' steps."<sup>80</sup> This sort of flippant talk from a pastor would be laughable except that Nigeria pastors sometimes seek to emulate what they see in influential American pastors and televangelists like Price.<sup>81</sup>

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78. Hagin, *The Believer's Authority*, 21-22.

79. Fred Price claims, "Kenneth Hagin has had the greatest influence upon my life of any living man." He was initially influenced by Hagin's book, *The Believer's Authority*. (Hagin, *The Believer's Authority*.) Price seems to take Hagin's book much further than Hagin did as he is the chief proponent of what he calls "Name It and Claim It" theology. Frederick K.C. Price, "Name It and Claim It! What Saith the WORD? . . .," *Ever Increasing Faith Messenger*, Summer 1989, 2.

Fred Price had an honorary diploma from the prosperity gospel Rhema Bible Training Center and an honorary Doctor of Divinity Degree from Oral Roberts University. According to ApologeticsIndex.org, Price died following hospitalization from Covid-19 on February 13, 2021.

80. Frederick K.C. Price, "Audiotape #CR-A2," *Ever Increasing Faith*, Crenshaw Christian Center: Trinity Broadcasting Network, December 9, 1990. In Hanegraaff, *Christianity In Crisis: The 21st Century*, 91.

81. Marius Nel: "Africans' prevailing interest in the prosperity gospel is not only connected to the influence of American prosperity teachers reaching a worldwide audience through their imaginative use of the media, including television, radio, social media and publications. It is however also related to the African worldview

Jesus taught that it isn't faith in ourselves or faith in our faith or the power of our words or even our demands, but deeply abiding in Christ that is the key to answered prayer. Perhaps this is because the will of those who abide fully in Christ and the Word will be in line with what God wants to do, namely to bear fruit:

Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing. Whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers; such branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples. (John 15:4–8)

### **Holy Spirit Victory Over Satan**

Besides presuming on God's love and grace, prosperity gospel preachers, like Hagin and Price credit Satan with more power and authority than the Bible indicates he actually has, as we saw above in the discussion of the "ransom theory" of the atonement. I do believe that believers can have victory over Satan, but for a different reason. I believe we have victory over Satan because of the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit (1 John 4:4).

Though the total and final triumph over Satan has been foretold and is sure, it is not yet complete. Christ is the victor, but to this very day He still allows Satan to roam about causing trouble (Eph. 4:27; 1 Pet 5:8; 6:11; Rev. 12:9, 12). Peter taught not presumption but humility in light of this:

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and African traditional religion, and its lasting influence on contemporary Africans and the way they think about prosperity, as well as their interest in prosperity in post-colonial Africa." Nel, *The Prosperity Gospel in Africa*, xiv.

Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you. Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world. (1 Pet 5:6–9)

Kunhiyop explains that ATR is very aware of the evil spirits and those influenced by it understand, perhaps better than most Western evangelicals, about the one the Bible calls the “prince of the power of the air” (Eph 2:2).<sup>82</sup> Kunhiyop writes regarding how the beliefs of ATR influence Christians: “In fact, strong belief in the spirit world and morbid fear have led many African Christians and churches into unbiblical doctrines and practices. The preoccupation with the occult, spiritism and witchcraft in many quarters is a clear indication that this subject needs urgent attention.<sup>83</sup> Christians need to base their thinking about the spirit world on the Bible, rather than on traditions.”<sup>84</sup>

It sounds easy, but it is a hard thing to escape your culture because it surrounds you like air. For some, the spirit world and ancestors still seem to be involved in everything people around them think and do. Elizabeth Mburu admits that for Christians: “Spiritual activity in our everyday lives is never doubted, and many of us have little problem recognizing the invisible dimension of our faith. A rationalistic explanation for the things that happen, particularly during times of crisis, is rarely the first option. The activity of angels and demons is a reality and many of us still believe in the power of witchcraft over our lives.”<sup>85</sup>

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82. Kunhiyop, *African Christian Theology*, 52.

83. See Chapter 1 Footnote 34 on child witches.

84. Kunhiyop, *African Christian Theology*, 53.

85. Mburu, *African Hermeneutics*, 44.

Only a truly biblical worldview, not sunk in the prosperity gospel, can begin to help preachers and their congregations escape this fear of Satan and evil spirits. Satan is real but Jesus is our Victor through the work of the Spirit. Being reconciled to God means that though we know there is a spiritual realm at work in the world (1 Pet 5:8-9) we do not live in fear of it because He who is in us is greater than the one who is in the world (1 John 4:1-6; See also Luke 10:19). Paul tells believers to stand in the truth of the Word, “be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places” (Eph 6:10-12). Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. (James 4:7; See also Eph 4:27; Rom 8:39).

Conversely, by feeding this fear, the prosperity gospel maintains power and so continues to grow in Africa. Kate Bowler who did her post-graduate work studying the prosperity gospel, believes that rather than focusing on our victory over Satan, the prosperity gospel actually feeds into the fear of unknown spiritual forces who influence our life by blaming all negative things on Satan. She calls the prosperity gospel a theodicy, an explanation for evil.<sup>86</sup>

This blending of the role of the Christian pastor (prophet) with the witch doctor, as mentioned in Chapter One, brings with it a temptation for lucrative gain for pastors as well as confusion for church members regarding the spirit-world. But, rather than calling in the prophet/occult expert or believing in faith in faith and the spoken word alone Paul claimed that

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86. Nel, *The Prosperity Gospel in Africa*, 48.

we must instead depend on the truth of God's Word, righteousness, the gospel of peace, and prayer to gain victory over Satan and the suffering he causes (Eph 6:13–18). This reminds us that the reason for this thesis is to help people read the Bible to understand the truth it contains. Positive thinking and lucky charms are not enough against such an adversary.

The Holy Spirit indwelling us is our divine power over all the darkness. Yet even our understanding of the power of the Holy Spirit has been twisted into something it isn't by some. Many trust in the Holy Spirit to do things for them that he never intends to do.

### **What the Holy Spirit Does Not Offer**

Though some might argue that one's theology of the atonement and reconciliation do not matter to how one teaches preaching, it is my observation that a skewed basic understanding of the benefits the Holy Spirit offers, as is found in the prosperity gospel, has profound effects on preaching and especially on how a preacher thinks about preparing for preaching. I see this when preachers come to my Thoughtful Proclaimer seminars hoping to learn the secret to supernatural encounters with the Spirit while standing in the pulpit rather than by dependence on the Holy Spirit to study and understand the Bible God inspired. I emphasize that the most important thing for the Thoughtful Proclaimer is to read closely what the Holy Spirit has already inspired. The Holy Spirit wasn't waiting until a person enters the pulpit to tell them what God says, God already told us his will for us in his Word. As I have mentioned before, I make a point to assure preachers that the Holy Spirit is just as powerful in their study as he is behind the pulpit.

D. R. McConnell warns that in fact:

The main cause for . . . chronic doctrinal tangents is readily apparent. From its inception to the present, the independent charismatic movement has had a defective doctrine of revelation. We charismatics are not adequately committed to the principle that the Bible is the only infallible rule of faith and practice. Correct doctrine comes from one source: apostolic teaching as it is expressed and preserved in the Holy Scriptures. The revelatory gifts of the Spirit—prophecy, words of wisdom and knowledge—can and should have their place in the church, but these gifts were never intended to become an alternative source of doctrine, thereby subverting the teaching of the Lord Jesus and his apostles. Until we become seriously committed to the principle that all doctrine and practice must be derived from the hermeneutically sound exegesis of God’s Word, our movement will remain vulnerable to an endless series of prophetic revelators and their bizarre teachings.<sup>87</sup>

So-called “revelation knowledge” and the claims of many to be modern day “apostles” has opened the way for an even greater proliferation of unbiblical theology to spread in Nigeria. Many claim to have extra-biblical knowledge. In fact, some of this knowledge is so special and new that it was even hidden, they claim, from the biblical authors.<sup>88</sup> Revelation knowledge, it is claimed, is supernatural knowledge of the spiritual world available to a special few. McConnell explains, “It reveals the ‘reality’” (a favorite Kenyon word) of the spiritual realm, as well as the illusory character of the physical realm.”<sup>89</sup> It is believed to be more dependable than its opposite; what Kenyon called “sense knowledge.” Sense knowledge is normal knowledge you get from reading, observation, or study of the Bible.<sup>90</sup> Hank Hanegraaff, an apologist on doctrinal issues and cults admits: “One of the frightening aspects of my research into Faith

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87. McConnell, *A Different Gospel*, 178-79.

88. This links second-century Gnosticism with the prosperity gospel. Nel, *The Prosperity Gospel in Africa*, 135.

89. McConnell, *A Different Gospel*, 101.

90. McConnell, *A Different Gospel*, 101.

theology [Word of Faith] is that over and over again I have discovered that the Faith teachers, while claiming to be receiving revelation knowledge from God, are in fact simply repeating stories that they have heard from one another.”<sup>91</sup>

Appointing oneself an apostle and then claiming special revelation knowledge that God reveals only to you, means that what you say is unassailable. Revelation knowledge is not the “revelation” Paul is writing about in 1 Corinthians 14:6, 26; Ephesians 1:17. The biblical teaching on revelation indicates that revelation is something offered in the church to be judged by the “prophets” (1 Cor 14:32)<sup>92</sup> But, this revelation knowledge that prosperity teachers speak of is supposed to be something new given to them directly from God. There is no one to judge it because the person who claims it claims God gave it only to them. In many cases, this revelation knowledge surpasses or conflicts with what the New Testament clearly teaches. And the biggest lie of the prosperity gospel has claimed is that we can basically have everything we want and so claim for ourselves, in other words we can have heaven on earth right now.

### **Complete Restoration is a Future Event**

The base of the problem with the prosperity gospel is the erroneous belief that the results of the Fall are abrogated for those who have enough faith.<sup>93</sup> This feeds into most of their

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91. Hanegraaff, *Christianity In Crisis: The 21st Century*, 150.

92. By “the prophets,” Paul presumably meant either judged against Scripture -the Old Testament is often referred to as “the prophets” or perhaps by those qualified by the New Testament church to judge revelations and prophecies as to their truth.

93. Kenneth Mbugua “Suffering” in Conrad Mbewe Michael Otieno Maura, Ken Mbugua, John Piper, Wayne Grudem, *Prosperity?: Seeking the True Gospel* (Plateau State, Nigeria: Africa Christian Textbooks Registered Trustees, 2015), 74.

other theological errors. But an orthodox biblical view of the Fall is that complete reconciliation and restoration are still future events. The process has begun, such as the change in our status from lost to found, from sinner to son and daughter, from living on our own power to having the power of the Holy Spirit.

We are reconciled to God at the time of conversion, but our full restoration to heavenly health and perfection has not yet occurred (Rev. 21:4). Even the bodies of believers, though we will one day be restored to new and eternal life, are decaying, and dying on earth (Gen 3:17-19; Rom 5:12; 1 Cor 15:22; 2 Cor 4:7-12, 16-18; 5:1-10; 12:7-10). All creation groans (Rom 8:19) including believers alive today. At the consummation of time, the creator will complete the reconciliation with his creation, and all will be fully restored (Isa 65:17; 66:22; 2 Pet 3:13; Rev 21:1-6). Until then, we wait for Christ's return (Gal 5:5; Heb 2:14; 9:28; 10:13; Jas 5:7; 2 Pet 3:8-14).

This is the complete opposite of what the prosperity gospel teaches. Kenneth Mbugua of the Gospel Coalition of Africa<sup>94</sup> explains: "The error of their preaching is not in what Christians will receive, but when they will receive it. They change God's timeline and therefore distort God's plan of restoration."<sup>95</sup> Reading Paul's autobiographical comments indicates that he and the apostles lived in finite and ailing human bodies in a fallen world. Poor Paul must not have known Kenneth Hagin's four steps that guarantee answered prayer.

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94. Kenneth Mbugua is the senior pastor of Emmanuel Baptist Church in Nairobi, Kenya and is a Council member of The Gospel Coalition Africa. He is the Managing Director of Ekklesia Africa which promotes biblical resources for building healthy churches. See <https://africa.thegospelcoalition.org/video/tgc-africa-who-we-are/>

95. Michael Otieno Maura, *Prosperity?: Seeking the True Gospel*, 74.

Instead Paul wrote:

For I think that God has exhibited us apostles as last of all, like men sentenced to death, because we have become a spectacle to the world, to angels, and to men. We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are wise in Christ. We are weak, but you are strong. You are held in honor, but we in disrepute. To the present hour we hunger and thirst, we are poorly dressed and buffeted and homeless, and we labor, working with our own hands. When reviled, we bless; when persecuted, we endure; when slandered, we entreat. We have become, and are still, like the scum of the world, the refuse of all things. (1 Corinthians 4:9–13)

### **Conclusion: Exegesis Leads to Good Theology**

I have spent a lot of time explaining the unbiblical truth that passes for the gospel in this chapter because I want to make it clear that the problem is serious. Theology matters.

Unbiblical teaching masquerading as the truth and mixed in with Scripture verses has blinded the eyes of many because it is so close to the truth. But, when you set out on a long journey, even a 5% error in direction will cause you end up in the wrong place. This is the danger of the prosperity gospel and syncretistic beliefs.

An understanding of what preaching for reconciliation really is and what the atonement confers on the believer is of paramount importance. Preaching must be rooted in the substitutionary view of the atonement. The biblical view is that heaven and the new earth are the promised future completion of the atonement. The hurdle for those preachers in Nigeria who preach the true gospel is that the unbiblical prosperity gospel spreads like weeds. And since these African traditional and prosperity teachings have already become ubiquitous in many of the largest churches and the culture they present grave danger for Christ's church worldwide.

Quite frankly, the prosperity gospel and African traditional religious culture fit well together. By using individual proof texts and topical preaching, it is possible to create something that closely resembles Christianity but is not Christianity. This confusing battle for truth can only be won through encouraging pastors and preachers to read the Bible and to give it priority over the writings of other popular preachers. Only in biblical truth will they be set free from this confusion. Jesus said, “If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free” (John 8:31–32). Learning to look for what God meant to say through the intents of his inspired authors (the dual a(A)uthorial intent of passages) will allow these preachers to know and preach the truth.

In the next chapter I will discuss the historical views of the hermeneutic of authorial intent and how they relate to teaching preaching in Nigeria.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### LITERATURE REVIEW: THE DUAL A(A)UTHORIAL INTENT OF THE WORD

This chapter reviews a few select literary philosophies and theologians who have influenced the field of authorial intention in Bible interpretation over the last few hundred years. Specifically, I am referring to the dual a(A)uthorial intent of the Bible, which is the intention of the Divine author as viewed through the discernable intention of the earthly inspired author. This is not meant to be a stand-alone review of all authorities in the field but is meant to tie this Thesis-Project into the wider world of the hermeneutic of authorial intent in both continental and American thinking. Ultimately, in the conclusion I will discuss how I believe this relates to teaching preaching in Nigeria.

By way of introduction, it is helpful to note that the method of teaching sermon preparation tested in the next chapter, Chapter Six, begins with “listening” to the Word, both by reading carefully and personally the written words and by listening for what we can tell of God’s purposes for them as God spoke through his inspired authors. The “listening” in this project, as I will show in the method (and textbook accompanying it), is followed by an inductive form of contextual exegesis fit within a canonical framework. The goal is to ultimately discern both the ancient timebound author’s intent and the Author’s ultimate universal intent for any passage of Scripture. I call this the dual a(A)uthorial intent or Commander’s Intent as it is called in the method used to teach preaching and sermon preparation in this thesis.<sup>1</sup>

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1. By way of review, the Commander’s Intent is discussed on pages 3-5 of this thesis. The Commander’s Intent is the dual a (A)uthorial intent of a passage, God’s intent as displayed in its particulars in his inspired author’s intents. See Chapter 2 of Anderson, *Thoughtful Proclaimer*.

Thus far in this Thesis-Project we have discussed theology that points to how the doctrine of inspiration leads to an understanding of the Bible as one book with dual authorship, whereby the many biblical authors spread out over long ages have written under the authority and power of the Divine Author. We have discussed the role of the preacher to be God's ambassador who speaks God's ultimate intents to the world as understood from the Bible. And we have seen that it is God's ultimate intent to reconcile the world to himself through the death of his Son Jesus Christ, and so that is inherent in anything we preach.

In chapters 1 and 4, we have seen that Christianity in Nigeria has lost sight of these goals, the fault of which could be said to lay in the following trends that began in Europe, moved to the United States, and are now affecting, in some ways, Nigeria.

### **The Decline of Bible Interpretation**

Biblical interpretation has generally assumed that Divine Authorial intention is based in and generally adequately covered by the intentions of the earthly author, since he is inspired by God for the purpose of speaking for him. Calvin, for example, sought to read the Bible for the inspired author's intention, which he understood to be the text's natural meaning.<sup>2</sup> Yet, the

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2. R. L. Hatchett wrote, "Calvin brought humanist hermeneutics to the service of the Reformation. Rather than searching for transcendent truths to be placed in one's theological system, he sought to read the Bible for the author's intention or the natural meaning of the text. He was sure that the Holy Spirit was behind all Scripture, at times even envisioning the authors as secretaries; but he also noted the human authors' distinctive styles.

Calvin treated the Bible as rhetoric. The commentator must identify general concepts (loci) of the text. Particular passages could then be examined and related to the main thrust of the author. Calvin believed that Scripture's rhetoric . . . was rich in persuasive figures and narration . . . Calvin concentrated not on the form of the words, which may be crucial for proof-texting or allegorizing, but rather on argument in its own context." R. L. Hatchett, "The Authority of the Bible," in *Biblical Hermeneutics: A Comprehensive Introduction to Interpreting Scripture*, ed. Steve Lemke Bruce Corley, Grant Lovejoy (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2002), 200.

Divine intention is most clear when the intentions of the individual texts are observed as part of God's communication as a whole, which is the Bible.<sup>3</sup> As simple as this seems to be, views on how we interpret the Bible are constantly morphing based on the religious culture and the cultural perspectives of those interpreting the Bible.

The canonical view in contemporary times begins with Brevard Childs, who based interpretation on the final form of the text with the entire canon of the church as context. By "canonization," he meant "the reception and acknowledgment of certain religious traditions as authoritative writings within a faith community [and the] process by which the collection arose which led up to its final stage of literary and textual stabilization."<sup>4</sup> Child's wrote, "The canon not only established the boundaries within which the Word of God was heard, but in addition it provided the context for its interpretation."<sup>5</sup>

Underlying this principle is that if the Bible has one author, it has one intent, which I have argued is the many aspects regarding the reconciliation of the world with God (2 Cor 5:18-20; Eph 2:14-19; Col 1:19-20). This includes evangelism, spiritual growth, and pastoral care or all aspects of the Christian life or life as God's beloved. Childs's views, as well as mine, of teaching the Old and New Testament as one book, is in line with the hermeneutics of the Reformation, *sola scriptura*. That is that the Bible is the ultimate source of truth and authority in matters of

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3. Lorin L. Cranford, "Modern New Testament Interpretation," in *Biblical Hermeneutics: A Comprehensive Introduction to Interpreting Scripture*, ed. Steve Lemke Bruce Corley, Grant Lovejoy (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2002), 147-48.

4. Childs, *Biblical Theology: A Proposal*, 39.

5. Childs, "Speech-Act Theory and Biblical Interpretation," 382.

faith, sufficient to stand alone.<sup>6</sup> Childs taught that the Bible stands as one whole made up of Israel's witness and the church's witness, bound together, but without forgetting whose witness they ultimately are, which is that of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit.<sup>7</sup> Thus the canon in total is the stabilizer for all meaning that can properly be derived from biblical interpretation.<sup>8</sup>

Randal Pelton teaches that the meaning of a text is dependent on the purposes of the author for writing the book.<sup>9</sup> No text in the Bible stands alone outside of its book. He also teaches that the intent of the author for writing the book is usually discernable from the opening and closing chapters of that book. Everything in between is somehow related to the author's main intent. In *Preaching with Accuracy*, Pelton teaches that authorial intent should be construed as fitting within God's intent, the canonical intent. He calls this the "canbi" (Canonical Big Idea). As far as I can tell, Pelton's "canbi" is equivalent to what I called the "Commander's Intent" in the proposed method of this Thesis-Project (see Chapter One and Six), or what I theologically have termed dual a(A)uthorial intent (see Chapter Two). Pelton wrote:

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6. James T. Spivey, "The Hermeneutics of the Medieval and Reformation Era," in *Biblical Hermeneutics: A Comprehensive Introduction to Interpreting Scripture*, ed. Steve Lemke Bruce Corley, Grant Lovejoy (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2002), 101. Childs, *Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments: Theological Reflection on the Christian Bible*, 720.

Childs, *Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments: Theological Reflection on the Christian Bible*, 720.

7. Brevard S. Childs, *Old Testament Theology in a Canonical Context*, 1st Fortress Press ed. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 7.

8. See Douglas J. Moo and Andrew David Naselli, "The Problem of the New Testament's Use of the Old Testament," in *The Enduring Authority of the Christian Scriptures*, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 2016), 201-04. Kevin Vanhoozer wrote, "The way the church reads the Scripture does not affect its meaning, only its significance." Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?*, 264 FN 93.

9. Randal Pelton Jeffrey Arthurs, "Preaching the Literary Forms of the Bible," 2012-2014, Gordon-Conwell Seminary.

Our search for something to preach began with discovering the meaning of a preaching portion alone (texbi). Then, we fleshed out it's [sic] meaning in light of its immediate context (conbi). We found "crucial missing elements" in our preaching portion supplied by the context. That leaves one more context that often supplies additional missing elements—the context of the entire Canon of Scripture (canbi). This is what we want to preach; this is the bull's eye of our interpretation.<sup>10</sup>

This canonical view of biblical interpretation supports the idea that dual a(A)uthorial intent is crucial for preachers to discern when they study a passage. In explaining how the two parts of the canon, Old and New, can be read as one book with two sources, theologian and literary philosopher Kevin Vanhoozer, in *Is There a Meaning in This Text*, explains, "The canon is a complete and completed communicative act, structured by a divine authorial intention. The divine intention does not contravene the intention of the human author but rather supervenes on it. In the same way, the Canon does not change or contradict the meaning of Isaiah 53 but supervenes on it and specifies its referent."<sup>11</sup>

Childs views it this way: "A major task of Biblical Theology is to reflect on the whole Christian Bible with its two very different voices, both of which the church confesses bear witness to Jesus Christ." He concedes that there is no single overarching hermeneutical theory by which to resolve the tension between the testimony of the Old Testament and the New Testament except to engage in theological reflection by studying the canonical text in detailed exegesis, which includes the whole canon, in order to do justice to the witness of both Testaments in the light of their subject matter, "who is Jesus Christ."<sup>12</sup> In emendation of Childs,

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10. Randal Emery Pelton, *Preaching with Accuracy: Finding Christ-Centered Big Ideas for Biblical Preaching, Preaching With Series* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2014), Location 1811.

11. Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?*, 265.

12. Childs, *Biblical Theology: A Proposal*, 54-55. According to Vanhoozer, Childs does not mean to say, as I do, that canonical intention is Divine Authorial intention, but that the whole canon is pointing to the subject, which

Pelton, and Vanhoozer, it is my understanding that there are many ways, in addition to pointing to Christ, in which a fuller reading of Scripture, since it is the more complete context, will round out or complete the theology of the subject matter of a single pericope.<sup>13</sup>

### Skepticism of the Text

Unfortunately for biblical interpretation, the trustworthiness of the canon came into question, if not before, certainly soon after the Reformation as further winds of the Enlightenment blew through the religious world. With the Bible's wider availability, schisms began to develop. "With *sola scriptura* came freedom from the church's extrabiblical authority. At the same time, some radical reformers went so far as to undermine biblical authority itself. In their literalistic, reductionistic zeal to discover the primitive message, humanistic skeptics discarded any doctrine they could not find explicitly articulated in the Bible."<sup>14</sup> Following that

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I understand from Childs's writings to be Jesus Christ. Kevin J. Vanhoozer, "Intention/Intentional Fallacy," in *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible*, ed. Craig G. Bartholomew Kevin Vanhoozer, Daniel J. Treier, N. T. Wright (Grand Rapids, MI: SPCK; Baker Academic, 2005).

13. I eschew the term "pericopal theology" in Abraham Kuruvilla's work as we will discuss below, because it indicates that a theology built on a pericope can somehow stand alone. Abraham Kuruvilla, "Pericopal Theology: An Intermediary Between Text and Application," *Trinity Journal* 31, NS (2010).

14. "Using reason as their final authority, they departed from the analogy of faith and became Socinians, Unitarians, Universalists, or Deists. Spiritualists did the opposite. Embellishing New Testament prophecy with new revelations they said were from the Holy Spirit, they established themselves as prophets of mystical, apocalyptic sects. Examples of those who made the 'spirit' their final authority were the Zwickau Prophets, the Swedenborgians, followers of Jacob Boehme, and the Quakers. Anabaptists and Baptists belong to a third tradition of radical reformers who employed a literal, primitivistic hermeneutic but always appealed to Scripture as the final authority." Karen O'Dell Bullock, "Post-Reformation Protestant Hermeneutics," in *Biblical Hermeneutics: A Comprehensive Introduction to Interpreting Scripture*, ed. Steve Lemke Bruce Corley, Grant Lovejoy (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2002), 115.

came a culture of emphasis on reason and scientific proof which began to overtake a culture where the Bible was simply taken on faith.

The Enlightenment brought with it the suspicion that biblical narrative could no longer be presumed to be truth unless proved so by “critical evidentialist” justification.<sup>15</sup>

Enlightenment philosophers such as Descartes and Kant believed that humans had the ability to know their own world and to think for themselves without relying on tradition or religious authority.<sup>7</sup> Dependence on the canon as the ultimate context of truth now required external validation.<sup>16</sup> The result was that the individuals who claimed to provide that evidence and justification for the text became the “makers of meaning” in regards to Scripture’s message, rather than the biblical author.<sup>17</sup>

In essence, we were freed to read the Bible as we saw fit, not as the church or author or even the Divine Author intended. Mark Gigniliat, an Old Testament scholar, claims that Rene Descartes cut the cord between faith and reason, and he was followed by Baruch Spinoza.<sup>18</sup> “What Descartes did for methodological certainty, Spinoza did for Biblical interpretation.”<sup>19</sup> Spinoza brought together the following assumptions: “(1) The Bible is a product of human history and evolution and is to be read in the light of its natural history, and (2) philosophy and

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15. Childs, “Speech-Act Theory and Biblical Interpretation,” 384.

16. Childs, “Speech-Act Theory and Biblical Interpretation,” 384.

17. Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?*, 45.

18. M.S. Gigniliat, *A Brief History of Old Testament Criticism: From Benedict Spinoza to Brevard Childs* (Zondervan Academic, 2012), 22-23.

19. Gigniliat, *A Brief History of Old Testament Criticism*, 22-23.

theology must be understood as two distinct disciplines.”<sup>20</sup> Spinoza held that “the natural light of reason” was the best tool to use for biblical interpretation.<sup>21</sup>

Thus, Spinoza set the standard for the modern-critical approach to Old Testament exegesis.<sup>22</sup> Gignilliat explains, “With Spinoza, the search for the text’s meaning becomes equated with the search for the text’s ostensive historical referent, setting, and immediate intention.”<sup>23</sup> The Divine intention of the canon was excluded. As one can imagine, these Cartesian modes of knowing brought with them rejection of miracles and denial of the supernatural and thus “changed the rules” of interpretation.<sup>24</sup>

Perhaps in response to these moves in hermeneutics, Friedrich Schleiermacher, who is considered the father of modern hermeneutics, felt the goal of interpretation was understanding the text as well as or better than its author did, and to understand the author better than the author knew himself.<sup>25</sup> For Schleiermacher, interpretation meant using imagination and intuition to understand the author’s intention rather than strictly basing that understanding on inferences made through the text.<sup>26</sup> His emphasis on the author’s psychological disposition, instead of bolstering a view toward authorial intent (as he may have

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20. Gignilliat, *A Brief History of Old Testament Criticism*, 15.

21. Gignilliat, *A Brief History of Old Testament Criticism*, 15.

22. Gignilliat, *A Brief History of Old Testament Criticism*, 15-16.

23. Gignilliat, *A Brief History of Old Testament Criticism*, 15-16.

24. Gignilliat, *A Brief History of Old Testament Criticism*, 16.

25. Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?*, 25, 231.

26. Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?*, 222.

been intending) eventually brought author-centered interpretation into further disrepute because it is difficult if not impossible to discern.<sup>27</sup>

Again, in response to the “romantic” views of Schleiermacher in assuming he could know the interior thoughts of an author, a new intellectual and critical study began to search for assumed historical backgrounds of texts and their settings and sought the intention—not of an unknown and unknowable author but of assumed extra-biblical “sources” behind the text. In so doing, they denied both a view supernatural revelation or inspiration as pertinent to the matter.<sup>28</sup>

Perhaps as a consequence, in seeking to study Israel’s past, Julius Wellhausen came up with the idea that the Pentateuch came from separate sources from different times in Israel’s history. Though many now question Wellhausen’s history of Israel and his “documentary hypothesis,” since his time, literary source criticism of the Bible has become a staple of hermeneutics. Because of Wellhausen, authorial intent for purposes of understanding Scripture has been forever complicated.<sup>29</sup>

The response on the conservative theological side was a doubling down of historical-grammatical exegesis to ascertain the author’s intent. This is seen, for example, in Carl Friedrich Keil and Franz Delitzsch’s commentary on the Old Testament. In the preface Keil specifically

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27. Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?*, 25.

28. Gignilliat, *A Brief History of Old Testament Criticism*, 15-16, 18.

29. Gignilliat, *A Brief History of Old Testament Criticism*, 76.

joins the battle against skepticism of the text which we have discussed above with this commentary:

With firm faith in the truth of this testimony of our Lord, the fathers and teachers of the Church in all ages have studied the Old Testament Scriptures, and have expounded the revelations of God under the Old Covenant in learned and edifying works, unfolding to the Christian community the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God which they contain, and impressing them upon the heart, for doctrine, for reproof, for improvement, for instruction in righteousness. It was reserved for the Deism, Naturalism, and Rationalism which became so prevalent in the closing quarter of the eighteenth century, to be the first to undermine the belief in the inspiration of the first covenant, and more and more to choke up this well of saving truth; so that at the present day depreciation of the Holy Scriptures of the Old Testament is as widely spread as ignorance of what they really contain. At the same time, very much has been done during the last thirty years on the part of believers in divine revelation, to bring about a just appreciation and correct understanding of the Old Testament Scriptures.<sup>30</sup>

#### Skepticism of the Author

Kevin Vanhoozer explains that during this moment in history, “In the academy, the scholar’s interest in the history of the Bible’s composition replaced the believer’s interest in its religious use.”<sup>31</sup> Source criticism became the focus of biblical studies so that rather than searching for an author’s or Author’s intent from the received biblical canon, exegesis became instead a search for possible historical sources of the texts. The end result of the focus we have discussed above on sources and redactors was ultimately a distrust of the author and even suspicion of there being a particular single author altogether. Vanhoozer wrote, “The author turns out to be [so scholars assured us] one more desperate attempt . . . to find an anchor

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30. Franz Delitzsch Carl Friedrich Keil, *Commentary on the Old Testament* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1873).

31. Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?*, 172.

outside the play of language with which to ground meaning.”<sup>32</sup> Ironically, French literary theorist and philosopher Roland Barthes wrote, “Writing is the destruction of every voice, of every point of origin. Writing is that neutral, composite, oblique space where our subject slips away, the negative where all identity is lost, starting with the very identity of the body writing.”<sup>33</sup>

Skepticism of the validity of the texts, brought on by source criticism, led to skepticism of both earthly authors and especially of there being One Divine Author of the canon. In *The Death of the Author*, Barthes explains that the refusal to assign a fixed meaning to texts led to a lack of certainty of meaning in everything. Barthes claims demise of the author brought with it a kind of liberation that “we may call counter theological, properly revolutionary, for to refuse to halt meaning is finally to refuse God.”<sup>34</sup>

It seems that once texts of any sort and the origins of Scripture in particular came under fire God himself took the bullet, because disregard of authorial intent in the secular world, as Barthes wrote, brought with it a loss of faith in the ultimate Author. Mark Taylor wrote in *Deconstructing Theology*, “The death of God was the disappearance of the Author who had inscribed absolute truth and univocal meaning in world history and human experience.”<sup>35</sup> In this

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32. Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?*, 62.

33. Barthes believes that not only is the author unnecessary, but recognition of an author’s intentions should not limit our understanding of a text. Rather than enhancing our understanding, connections to an author, he writes, limit our appreciation and remove greater possible elucidation of piece of writing. Roland Barthes, “The Death of the Author,” in *Image, Music, Text* (London: Fontana, 1977), 142.

34. Barthes, “The Death of the Author,” in *Image, Music, Text*, 147. See also Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?*, 457.

35. Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, “On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense,” in *The Portable Nietzsche* (New York: Viking, 1954).

same era, Nietzsche's pronouncement of the "death of God" coincided with this disappearance of the authority that authors had over their work and thus that God had over his.<sup>36</sup> He wrote,

God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him. How shall we comfort ourselves, the murderers of all murderers? What was holiest and mightiest of all that the world has yet owned has bled to death under our knives: who will wipe this blood off us? What water is there for us to clean ourselves? What festivals of atonement, what sacred games shall we have to invent? Is not the greatness of this deed too great for us? Must we ourselves not become gods simply to appear worthy of it?<sup>37</sup>

Humankind became, finally, its own authority; we were the author of our lives and the determiner of meaning as we saw fit. All restraint that a deity or canonized truth might bring was now gone. Vanhoozer, a strong proponent of the need for authorial intent in biblical interpretation, clarifies further that the "death of the author" was more than a literary theory but ultimately a "radical critique of the task of interpretation and of the way Western culture has traditionally understood itself in relation to the classic texts of literature, philosophy, and the Christian faith."<sup>38</sup> In Christianity the meaning of a text had been understood as the intention of the author, whether the intention of the human author (as in modernity) or of the Divine Author (as in much medieval exegesis).<sup>39</sup> In short, the author's intention, which had been the object of traditional interpretation, the longed-for "home of meaning" where the author's will,

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36. Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?*, 48.

37. Nietzsche, "On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense," in *The Portable Nietzsche*, 46-47. James Sire, *Naming the Elephant: Worldview as Concept*, 2nd ed. (Downer's Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2015), 28.

38. Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?*, 73-74.

39. Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?*, 73-74.

words, and world coincide, was no longer needed as biblical texts were now disembodied and open to any interpretation one might wish to offer.<sup>40</sup>

### Resulting Loss for the Bible and Preaching

The effect all of this had on biblical interpretation and preaching should be noted here. This post-Reformation drift away from the reliability of text and author contributed to a loss of preaching as speaking for God by those who had heard from God, the Author of his Word.<sup>41</sup> Since the Bible was now seen as a compilation of ancient Jewish and Christian texts, the product of human editors and history, preaching lost sight of the confident Reformation fire that said “the preaching of the Word of God is the Word of God.”<sup>42</sup> The church’s preaching began to be focused on explaining historical and cultural situations of texts, preaching on Christian doctrine, or preaching inspirational messages projected by the text but not preaching focused on the ultimate Author’s intent, the message of the one who inspired the text. In other places, “sermons . . . were judged not by whether they carried the listener into the presence of God, but almost exclusively by how well they adhered to the truth by explaining the particular text or doctrine under consideration.”<sup>43</sup> “Preachers conceived of what they were doing in the

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40. Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?*, 73-74.

41. Rottman, “Performative Language and the Limits of Performance in Preaching,” in *Engaging Worship*, 73, 75.

42. Bullinger, *The Second Helvetic Confession* (Annotated Edition). Rottman, “Performative Language and the Limits of Performance in Preaching,” in *Engaging Worship*, 73-75.

43. Rottman, “Performative Language and the Limits of Performance in Preaching,” in *Engaging Worship*, 75.

sermon as explication of one of those Scripture passages or church doctrines.” Preachers talked about God and explained the Bible but did not speak for God as his ambassadors.

### Small Steps Back Towards Preaching as Speaking for God

John Rottman explains how preaching has begun to turn back to speaking for God:

From just after World War I through the 1960s, several important developments in theology worked to move preaching away from treating God merely as the topic of conversation in the sermon and toward recognizing the role of God in sermon performance. The theology of Karl Barth, particularly the appearance of his *The Word of God and the Word of Man*, translated into English in 1928 had a formidable effect on preaching. Barth emphasized the Word of God as active and alive.<sup>44</sup>

Barth tied preaching directly to the Word of God, complaining that even before the Enlightenment, “Renaissance man tried to control the Bible and also tried to set up obstacles to stop it controlling him, as indeed it ought to do.”<sup>45</sup> Barth attempted to return preaching to what it had been in the Reformation; in other words, speaking the Word as a God event. “The presupposition which makes proclamation and therewith makes the Church the Church is the Word of God. This attests itself in Holy Scripture in the word of the prophets and apostles to whom it was originally and once and for all spoken by God’s revelation.”<sup>46</sup>

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44. Barth, *The Word of God and the Word of Man*. See H. Grady Davis, *Design for Preaching* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1958), 105. According to Rottman, Barth’s impact was already felt with the publication of his commentary on Romans (*der Römerbrief*) in 1919. Rottman, “Performative Language and the Limits of Performance in Preaching,” in *Engaging Worship*, 76.

45. Barth, *The Doctrine of the Word of God*, vol. 1, part 1, 113.

46. Barth, *The Doctrine of the Word of God*, vol. 1, part 1, 88. For Barth, the Word of God is threefold: 1) the Word of God preached, 2) the Word of God written, 3) the Word of God revealed. Barth, *The Doctrine of the Word of God*, vol. 1, part 1, 114.

Barth was deeply troubled by the results of the skepticism we have reviewed above and that he aimed to correct:

The Bible was now grounded upon itself apart from the mystery of Christ and the Holy Ghost. It became a “paper Pope,” and unlike the living Pope in Rome it was wholly given up into the hands of its interpreters. It was no longer a free and spiritual force, but an instrument of human power. And in this form the Bible became so like the holy books of other religions, for which something similar had always been claimed, that the superiority of its claim could not be asserted in relation to them or to the many achievements of the human spirit generally . . . The intention in establishing the authority of the Bible along these lines was to avoid historical relativism, but it opened up the way to it, and theology and the Church did not hesitate for a moment to tread that way.<sup>47</sup>

Barth’s solution to the hermeneutical problem of preaching from a “human” Bible was to point out that the ultimate Word of God is Jesus Christ and the Word of God is grounded in him, not pre-canonical sources or assumed editor/authors. For Barth the Word of God was God’s Word, inspired by God’s Spirit and representing God’s Son, Jesus Christ. He argued volubly for the Divine Author:

In the statement that “the Bible is the Word of God,” we cannot suddenly mean a lesser, less potent, less ineffable and majestic Word of God, than that which has occupied us in the doctrine of the Trinity and in the doctrine of Christ and of the Holy Spirit. There is only one Word of God and that is the eternal Word of the Father which for our reconciliation became flesh like us and has now returned to the Father, to be present to His Church by the Holy Spirit. In Holy Scripture, too, in the human word of His witnesses, it is a matter of this Word and its presence. That means that in this equation [the Bible] is a matter of the miracle of the divine Majesty in its condescension and mercy.<sup>48</sup>

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47. Karl Barth, *The Doctrine of the Word of God*, trans. and Thomas F. Torrance Geoffrey William Bromiley, vol. 1, part 2, *Church Dogmatics* (New York, London: T. & T. Clark, 2004), 525-26.

48. Barth, *The Doctrine of the Word of God*, vol. 1, part 2, 512-13. Perhaps his vehemence on the subject of the Word of God is due to this constant connection he makes between John’s Word which was in the beginning, was with God, was God, and all things were made by him (John 1:1-3) and the Word of God in the Bible.

Barth encouraged preachers to think about preaching as an event in which God speaks to his people from the Bible.<sup>49</sup> Theologian Mark Alan Bowald explained that Barth's theological method is the most significant modern example of an attempt in this direction.<sup>50</sup> Professor of theology Joe Mangina suggests that for Barth, "Rather than seeking to justify talk about God he talks about God, rightly finding God a more interesting topic than his own post-Enlightenment skepticism. The amazing thing about Barth in the landscape of modern Christian thought is that he *gets started*, thereby offending against the endless deferrals that characterize a timid age."<sup>51</sup>

### Reader Response and the Text

As we have seen, the history of Bible interpretation has been a continual wrestling match between God, the text, the author, and, most recently, the reader.<sup>52</sup> One must ask why theologians still used the Bible at all since it had been shown to be merely a human book composed of a hodgepodge of manuscripts. Evidentially, the Bible and preaching still held a strong attachment on the people. So, instead of completely ignoring the Bible, interpretation was reinvented as a shift to find the "horizon" or "projection" of the text.<sup>53</sup> The text's meaning

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49. Barth, *The Word of God and the Word of Man*, 122-24.

50. Mark Alan Bowald, *Rendering the Word in Theological Hermeneutics: Mapping Divine and Human Agency, Studies in Historical and Systematic Theology* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2015), 245-246, note 33.

51. Mark Alan Bowald, *Rendering the Word in Theological Hermeneutics: Mapping Divine and Human Agency, Studies in Historical and Systematic Theology* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2015), 246, note 33.

52. Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?*, 25.

53. Vanhoozer writes that Ricoeur thought that "A text's inability to show us what it is speaking about turns out to be the condition for its ability to project a 'world.'" Vanhoozer continues, "With his revised account of sense and reference, Ricoeur gives a precision to Gadamer's notion of the fusion of horizons. As interpreters,

was now in the hands of the readers and was viewed as a deep well of possible meanings.<sup>54</sup> In the search for a literary philosophy for understanding the Bible, “no twentieth-century philosophers have done more on behalf of hermeneutics than Hans-Georg Gadamer and Paul Ricoeur.”<sup>55</sup>

For Gadamer, “To understand a text always means to apply it to ourselves and to know that, even if it must be understood in different ways, it is still the same text presenting itself.”<sup>56</sup> This subjective way of understanding a text escapes the critical exegetical problems we have thus been facing in this chapter, but also leaves us with no way to be critical of the result at all since the reader and the text are co-creators of the meaning.

The literary philosophy of Paul Ricoeur also separated the written text from its author. He believed, “The book divides the act of writing and the act of reading into two sides, between which there is no communication. The reader is absent from the act of writing; the writer is absent from the act of reading. The text thus produces a double eclipse of the reader and writer. It thereby replaces the relation of dialogue, which directly connects the voice of one to the hearing of the other.”<sup>57</sup> For Ricoeur, this separation of text from author is “not a loss to be mourned but a gain to be celebrated. The autonomy of the text is the condition of its ‘surplus’

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Ricoeur believes, we do not meet a mind behind the text; rather, we encounter a possible way of looking at things, a possible world, in front of the text.” Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?*, 106-09.

54. Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?*, 106.

55. Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?*, 106.

56. H.G. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2013), 416. Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?*, 106.

57. Paul Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences: Essays on Language, Action and Interpretation*, trans. John B. Thompson (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 108.

of meaning, that is, of its transcending its original situation and having something to say to readers in the present.”<sup>58</sup> What the text means no longer necessarily coincides with what the author meant. Ricoeur wrote that “textual meaning and psychological meaning have different destinies.”<sup>59</sup> Since the text is independent of its author, of its original audience, and of its original referent, historical-grammatical exegesis is unnecessary. Thanks to writing, “The text’s career escapes the finite horizon lived by its author.”<sup>60</sup>

The positive aspect of Ricoeur’s work, from my perspective, is that he brought the focus of biblical interpretation back to the final canon rather than an over-focus on textual sources or psychology. Unfortunately, his work also contributed to the continual slide away from studying the Bible as the written discourse of an author whose intent is necessary to be considered if we are to understand the text’s meaning.<sup>61</sup> For Ricoeur, it is the sense of the text rather than the original author’s intention or the originating situation which should be the object of interpretation.<sup>62</sup>

Ricoeur also believed that reading opened up a world that lies “in front of the text” and which can be explored by the interpreter’s imagination.<sup>63</sup> “This is a world that we can think of

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58. Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?*, 107.

59. Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, 101.

60. Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, 163.

61. This idea of the Bible as written discourse is at the root of the solution we propose, which is to use rhetoric and speech act theory to reconnect the text and the author.

62. David and Dauenhauer Pellauer, Bernard, “Paul Ricoeur,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta (<<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2016/entries/ricoeur/>>. Winter 2016).

63. Abraham Kuruvilla credits his idea of studying “the world in front of the text” to Paul Ricoeur. “Paul Ricoeur’s most important contribution to interpretation theory, the *world in front of the text*, achieves notability: this world is the text’s referent (what the text is all about) that transcends the effects of distancing. Ricoeur’s

ourselves as inhabiting.”<sup>64</sup> Ricoeur wrote the “text’s career escapes the finite horizon lived by its author.”<sup>65</sup>

Though I might agree with Ricoeur that the text, once it leaves the pen of the author, may now say more than what the author meant, I believe the laws of context require that trying to understand what the author meant to say should be the basis for any further search for meaning.<sup>66</sup> The Bible loses its authority when we merely seek the “projection” brought on by a text as construed by imagination as well as the specificity of a “sense” of a text despite its perhaps being opposed to an author’s intent or outside of the Canon’s theological fence.

Those who follow Ricoeur, such as Abraham Kuruvilla, are focused on “the pragmatic operation of language—what authors do with what they say—[as] particularly important for this capacity of texts to impact future readers. What authors are doing is projecting a world in front of the text bearing an intention that is transhistorical, transcending the specific circumstances of the author and the writing; i.e., the text is given a future orientation, enabling valid application by readers at locations and times far removed from those of the event of

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notion provides the framework for the interpretation, by readers in ages and places far away, of a text that has undergone distanciation. For such texts, this concept is particularly useful, and even more so when their interpretation is intended to culminate in application, as with sermons on Scripture.” Kuruvilla, *Privilege the Text!: A Theological Hermeneutic for Preaching*, 39. Nicholas Wolterstorff counters, “A text’s sense projects a way of being-in-the-world. Ricoeur was right to look for a practice of interpretation located in the space between Romanticism and structuralism. But what occupies that space is not the practice of textual sense interpretation but the practice of authorial-discourse interpretation—a specific version of this being the practice of reading sacred texts to discern divine discourse.” Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse: Philosophical Reflections on the Claim that God Speaks*, 201. Though both Kuruvilla and Wolterstorff’s views have some value, ultimately they fall short of the dual a(A)uthorial view, in other words honoring both the inspired author’s intent and the ultimate Author’s purposes for including that intent in his Word.

64. Pellauer, “Paul Ricoeur,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.

65. Pellauer, “Paul Ricoeur,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.

66. Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse: Philosophical Reflections on the Claim that God Speaks*, 124-25.

inscription.”<sup>67</sup> In this focus on individual projections, Kuruvilla is free to build theology, one pericope at a time.<sup>68</sup> This is a building-block approach to studying scripture for sermon preparation. Each passage stands on its own in its incomplete context.

Dual-a(A)uthorial intent, as I have proposed, starts with seeking the author’s intent from a whole book, and especially in the case of the apostle Paul, looks for intent also in the corpus of his work. Though both Kuruvilla and I emphasize studying the text, Kuruvilla’s text-based hermeneutic is a bottom-up method, building from some smaller section of an author’s complete work, whereas a thoroughgoing a(A)uthorial intent paradigm is more V-shaped, starting at the top with an author’s entire book, moving down to the individual pericope, and back up through the canon (Divine Author) before focusing on theology or application.<sup>69</sup> Though both methods may sound similar, in practice they are quite different and the resulting sermons may be profoundly different.

### The Deconstruction of the Text

Jacques Derrida is known as the father of what we now call deconstruction. Just when we took a swing back toward text we meet Derrida, who, as incredible as it seems considering his views, was once Ricoeur’s assistant. Derrida took Ricoeur’s authorial distancing to its

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67. Kuruvilla, *Privilege the Text!: A Theological Hermeneutic for Preaching*, 27.

68. “A two-step transaction is thereby envisaged in the preaching process: the task of the preacher consists in moving from pericope to theology, and subsequently from theology to application.” Kuruvilla, *Privilege the Text!: A Theological Hermeneutic for Preaching*, 90.

69 Abraham Kuruvilla does speak frequently of author’s but he does not speak of “intent” but rather what the author is “doing.” This has more to do with speech-act theory.

ultimate and unfortunate destination which is to disassociate the text and author altogether. Vanhoozer explains further: “The motive behind Derrida’s strategy of undoing stems from his alarm over illegitimate appeals to authority and exercises of power. The belief that one has reached the single correct Meaning (or God, or “Truth”) provides a wonderful excuse for damning those with whom one disagrees as either ‘fools’ or ‘heretics.’”<sup>70</sup> Derrida, in typical postmodern thinking, challenges the idea of arriving at one fixed or correct view. Derrida extends his thinking beyond texts to everything. Vanhoozer explains, “Neither Priests, who supposedly speak for God, nor Philosophers, who supposedly speak for Reason, should be trusted; this ‘logocentric’ claim to speak from a privileged perspective (e.g., Reason, the Word of God) is a bluff that must be called, or better, ‘deconstructed.’”<sup>71</sup> Deconstruction frames authority as “privilege,” and that in a negative sense.

Postmodernity and the culture we are immersed in, at least in the United States, is by and large deconstructionist. This has profound implications on preachers, sermons, and congregations as we are now learning to exegete not only a text but also our audience. Derrida’s rejection of philosophy’s traditional concern for rationality and truth is, as we can imagine, a theological move. The ramifications of knocking the author from the throne of his or her own work (deconstruction) has brought with it a critique of firm belief, a denial of existential truth, and a lack of commitment to cultural or moral constructs because in the end, nothing is reliable or ultimately matters.<sup>72</sup>

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70 Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?*, 21.

71. Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?*, 21.

72. Christopher Butler, *Postmodernism: A Very Short Introduction, Very short introductions* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 17.

## The Move to Social Criticism in Scripture

The idea of the authority of the reader to construe his or her own meaning, apart from any regard for the author, has brought with it yet another form of biblical criticism called social criticism. Deconstruction led to the idea that a reader was the ultimate arbiter of meaning, certainly not an author, especially a dead one. Combining this with the idea of a reader's response to Scripture being as a valid an interpretation as any other, has allowed for many social groups to come up with their own "meanings" to Scripture. Admittedly, we all see Scripture through our own social and denominational lenses and Scripture does speak to our own personal discontent and discouragement. However, in social criticism it is this psychological perspective, not the author's intent, that matters. Just as in the time of the Protestant Reformation, the idea that some authority could provide definitive interpretations of the Bible is rejected. Many social groups, in a faint Marxist echo, feel that the biblical interpretations of the past were written to maintain the social status quo, to discriminate, and to control, and so they have written their own.

## Contextualization

One example of how social critical interpretations and reader's responses play out can be seen in the writings of José Severino Croatto (1930–2004).<sup>73</sup> He is an especially interesting

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73. Jose Severino Croatto was a Argentinian Catholic scholar, author, and professor. The work to which I refer is J. Severino Croatto, *Bible Hermeneutics: Toward a Theory of Reading as the Production of Meaning*, trans. Robert R Barr (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1984).

example, since his writings, which arose in the context of Latin American liberation theology, are one of the social critical studies of the Bible. Liberation theology believes that the Bible can best be understood from the perspective of the poor. That is the lens liberation theologians choose to read Scripture with, rather than by attempting to read it first with the original author's lens. In many cases, this can offer valuable insights because poverty is a key motif in the Bible as seen, for example, in Mary's Magnificat (Luke 1:52-53).

But Croatto also wrote a book on hermeneutics from the view of a reader's response, *Bible Hermeneutics: Toward a Theory of Reading as the Production of Meaning*.<sup>74</sup> He wrote that the Bible must not be viewed as a fixed deposit that has already said everything—it is not so much what the Bible “said” but what it “says.” In committing their message to writing, the biblical authors themselves disappeared as in Gadamer and Ricoeur, and their absence means semantic richness for the reader. The “closure” of authorial intent results in the “opening” of new meaning. Croatto felt that the reader's responsibility is not exegesis—bringing out a pure meaning the way one might take an object out of a treasure chest—but properly the interpreter should commit eisegesis; that is, we must “enter” the text with new questions so as to produce new meaning.<sup>75</sup>

Missiologists call this particular type of reader response “contextualization,” an incarnational reading of the Word, which makes Scripture applicable to people in different

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74. Croatto, *Bible Hermeneutics: Toward a Theory of Reading as the Production of Meaning*, 31-33, 49-50, 65.

75. Croatto, *Bible Hermeneutics: Toward a Theory of Reading as the Production of Meaning*, 66.  
See also Thomas G. Long, “The Use of Scripture in Contemporary Preaching,” *Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and Theology* 44, no. 4 (October 1, 1990 1990).

cultures and situations, whereas some, such as Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, would differ to perhaps to an extreme, by insisting our focus remain firmly and only on the author's original situation. They say, "A text cannot mean what it never meant. Or to put it in a positive way, the true meaning of the biblical text for us is what God originally intended it to mean when it was first spoken."<sup>76</sup> And in another place they conclude, "Unfortunately common sense is not always so common. We want to know what the Bible means for us—legitimately so. But we cannot make it mean anything that pleases us and then give the Holy Spirit 'credit' for it."<sup>77</sup>

None the less, and with profound respect to Gordon and Fee, no one can truly read without their spectacles; one can at best only remain aware of the hue of the lens. For this reason, teaching preaching is a matter of focusing on the intent of the original author to the extent possible, yet through the lens of the community being preached to. As the missionary and theologian Lesslie Newbigin wrote, "Every Christian reader comes to the Bible with the spectacles provided by the tradition that is alive in the community to which he or she belongs, and that tradition is being constantly modified as each new generation of believers endeavors to be faithful in understanding and living out Scripture. This is the hermeneutical circle operating within the community."<sup>78</sup> What I am trying to say in this thesis is that the goal of interpretation begins with understanding the intent of the author and the Author and then, and only then are we free to apply it to the context of the community and tradition to which we

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76. Gordon D. Fee, and Douglas K. Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*, 4th ed ed. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2014), 30.

77. Fee, and Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*, 30.

78. Lesslie Newbigin, *Foolishness to the Greeks : the Gospel and Western culture* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1986), 56-57.

belong. In this way, the dual a(A)uthorial intent approach to interpretation fits each community of faith in which it is applied, while remaining true to the original intents.

### **Concluding Thoughts on Dual a(A)uthorial Intent**

In conclusions, we must return from literary philosophical concerns in communities of the past and in places far removed from the context of this project, which was Nigeria. Teaching biblical interpretation for preaching, no matter where it occurs, is about encouraging thorough reading and biblical contextual exegesis. Though the culture where the teaching take place is different, the method of interpreting Scripture remains the same no matter if I teach skeptical postmodern people, evangelical Americans, or neo-charismatic Nigerians. This is because ultimately it is God's intent we want to discern and to preach.

Whereas we have been discussing European/American skepticism above and in Chapter Four we looked at a more highly spiritualized African worldview of revelation without reading; the road forward is very similar for both. A skeptical reader response/or a "Spirit-led" view that ignores reading can become a Spirit-led full reading of biblical books in a canonical context. Reading can be trinitarian, encompassing each person of the trinity, because the Holy Spirit has given us God's Word by which we can know the Word incarnate, Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit indwelling us also brings to light what he meant when he inspired the original author. The work of the Spirit enabling us to digest and live the Word (keep the commandments) is part of what Jesus called, abiding in himself (see Jesus's teachings in John 14 to 16).

It is the same Bible, no matter the language. It is one single witness from two perspectives, the Old and New Testaments. All preachers, no matter where they are, will benefit from being encouraged to read and consider both the Bible's contexts as they speak into and correct their own. The preacher considers what God was saying and what he is still saying to us today.

Joel Kamsen Tihitshak Biwul, author of *Preaching the Scriptures*, wrote in his 2013 article, "The Challenge of Pastoral Hermeneutics in Africa: Suggestions for Effective Preaching by Nigerian Pastors," that hermeneutics in Nigeria requires the same standards of reading in context as we have been promoting in this project. He writes,

One's basic task in preaching or teaching the biblical text is to derive and communicate the original intended meaning of the divine author in partnership with the inspired human authors. People of faith accept inspired Scripture as the final authority in matters of faith and practice and as the only absolute guidebook for life. As the preacher or teacher calls attention to sacred Scripture therefore, he/she has the demand to ensure that the originally intended meaning of what God actually said in written Scriptures (at least as close as possible) is communicated correctly and adequately to the contemporary audience. The biblical injunction for pastoral hermeneutics is to 'rightly handle the word of truth' (2 Tim 2:15).

Biwul is sharpening us, holding teaching preaching to the highest and best standards in order that Nigerian preachers can overcome the problems we have discussed in chapters 1 and 4 and to preclude the declines and skepticisms that have so devastated Christianity in Europe and the United States and have undoubtedly contributed to the prosperity gospel in Africa.

Elizabeth Mburu has also contextualized hermeneutics for the African context by visualizing a four-legged stool where each leg is a context upon which rests the application, the seat. The legs are 1) parallels to the African context, 2) the theological context, 3) the literary

context (this is where she discusses authorial intent), and 4) the historical context.<sup>79</sup> Latin American theologian Samuel Escobar contends that “the day is surely past when we simply allow third world believers to ‘have their say’ while we Western theologians prepare the definite answers to their questions. For now we recognize that if we listen carefully we find our own assumptions challenged and our thinking sharpened.”<sup>80</sup>

And that is what I like about this project: it is a product of and perhaps some correction to the hermeneutical philosophies we have been reading about in this chapter, taking the best parts and putting them into practice for the future of Africa. At least in my mind, it is giving Nigerian preachers a toolbox of questions that focuses Spirit-empowered Bible study to find both the original biblical author’s and God’s universal purposes for a significant length passage (a passage long enough to convey one of the author’s main ideas) in order to improve the ability of preachers to preach biblical, contextual, redemptive, theologically accurate (expository) sermons.

The hermeneutic offered in this thesis is based first on the Bible’s contexts and then on the African context, circumventing Western or postmodern views. The Reformation put the Bible into Nigerian hands as well as Western ones, and all are equally responsible for preaching the Word well. Escobar reminds us that we give the Scriptures in people’s own languages so that the average Christian can understand them by reading and through the power of the Holy Spirit. He writes, “We should always keep in mind Luther’s conviction of its perspicuity: the

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79. Mburu, *African Hermeneutics*, 72, 80-81.

80. Samuel Escobar, *The New Global Mission: The Gospel from Everyone to Everywhere Christian Doctrine in Global Perspective*, ed. John Stott David Smith (IVPress Academic), 137.

Bible is a clear book. Catholicism had maintained that the Scriptures were so obscure that only the teaching ministry of the Church could uncover their true meaning. To Luther the perspicuity of the Bible was coupled with the priesthood of believers, so that the Bible became the property of all Christians.”<sup>81</sup>

It is true that the Bible is sufficiently clear to yield its meaning to the believer and that Scripture interprets Scripture.<sup>82</sup> It should also be noted that many times, the African reader identifies with the original author and understands a text and an author’s purpose for writing more easily than a Westerner. The Bible is not Western in any sense; and it is always counter-cultural no matter which culture it is preached in. But we still should be reminded that in reading any text, it is not our own view or our cultural ideals that we seek, but in first instance it is God’s view as he has given it to us through the writings of the original author he inspired.

The issue at stake is not who can read the Bible but Who wrote it and whether the writers God inspired have any authority over their message. It is also important for teaching preaching to remember that authorial intent and Authorial or canonical intent are goals and guides, so that we all ultimately hear the voice of God in the Word of God. The next two chapters contain the method for teaching preaching that was used and the results of the testing of those methods.

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81. Escobar, *The New Global Mission: The Gospel from Everyone to Everywhere* 131.

82. Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation: A Textbook of Hermeneutics*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1970), 53-58.

## CHAPTER SIX

### DEVELOPING AND TESTING THE THESIS-PROJECT:

#### THE THOUGHTFUL PROCLAIMER METHOD OF MESSAGE PREPARATION

This Thesis-Project proposed to test a method of teaching preachers in Nigeria to understand the basics of preparing authorial intent-based expository sermons in one week.<sup>1</sup> In Chapter Two we settled on our definition of expository preaching as the ambassadorial proclamation of God's words as found in biblical texts set within historical and canonical context. That is, it is a kind of preaching that not only informs listeners about the Bible but also persuades them to act or think differently about something as a result of God's purposes as indicated by the intent of his inspired authors and as reflected in their individual books of the Bible. I proposed using an inductive, context-focused hermeneutic in the preparation of theologically accurate biblical sermons.<sup>2</sup> The method was tested twice in the United States and

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1. Haddon Robinson defined expository preaching as "the communication of a biblical concept, derived from and transmitted through a historical, grammatical, and literary study of a passage in its context, which the Holy Spirit first applies to the personality and experience of the preacher, then through the preacher, applies to the hearers." Robinson, *Biblical Preaching*, Location 228.

2. David Bauer and Robert Traina explain that "the term inductive is used in both a broader and a narrower sense. In the broader sense, it involves a commitment to move from the evidence of the text and the realities that surround the text to possible conclusions (or inferences) regarding the meaning of the text. In this sense, inductive is practically synonymous with evidential over against deductive, which is presuppositional, involving a movement from presuppositions with which one approaches the text to a reading of the text intended to support these presuppositions." David R. Bauer, Traina, Robert A., *Inductive Bible Study* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011), 1.

The narrower sense of the word "inductive" when referring to Bible study, is a style of study associated with examining a text in its final canonical form where the student is generally not troubled with original historical sources. The text should be studied in a student's mother-tongue whenever possible. Special attention is paid to the "immediate and broader-book context of passages and the literary structure of passages themselves inform students' understanding of their meaning" (Bauer, *Inductive Bible Study*, 2-3.).

In his article "Inductive Biblical Interpretation and Mother-Tongue Biblical Hermeneutics: A Proposal for Pentecostal/Charismatic Ministries in Ghana Today," Daniel Nii Aboagye Aryeh, a faculty member in Biblical Studies of Trinity Theological Seminary in Accra, Ghana, also recommends inductive Bible study to be done in a person's mother tongue, though he realizes some prefer the KJV. He calls it "mother tongue Biblical hermeneutics"

then in Nigeria by evaluating the participants' perceived areas of learning using extensive participant surveys.

The development of this Project consisted of two primary phases. In Phase 1—Project Design and Method Development, I decided on the key objectives, the development of a step-by-step method for teaching preaching which included those objectives (the worksheets), and the preparation of a textbook based on those methods. In Phase 2—Method Use and Evaluation, I created a process for using and testing the method and the textbook by teaching it in three seminars (one shorter proof-of-concept seminar, a second comprehensive seminar, and a full seminar in Nigeria). The results of these seminars are discussed in Chapter Seven. The complete seminar syllabus, the assignment worksheets, and the detailed results are provided in the appendices.

By way of preview, the bare basics of the Thoughtful Proclaimer method are:

1. Determine the Commander's intent for a substantial portion of Scripture by inductively studying the purposes of the passage, its many contexts, and our audience.<sup>3</sup>
2. Decide on the Point for Proclamation which is derived from the Commander's intent, and prepare a teaching or sermon with that Point as your guiding light and central

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or MTBH. He believes it can help combat the "overreliance on the Spirit for scripture interpretation. The belief is that since the Spirit inspired the authors of the books of the Bible, and hence one does not need formal theological training to interpret the scriptures." Aryeh's view is in agreement with this Thesis-Project. See Daniel Nii Aboagye Aryeh, "Inductive Biblical Interpretation and Mother-Tongue Biblical Hermeneutics: A Proposal for Pentecostal/Charismatic Ministries in Ghana Today," *The Journal of Inductive Biblical Studies* 3, 2 (Summer, 2016).

3. By way of review, what I term "Commander's Intent" in my training seminars is synonymous is based on we have discussed in Chapters Two through Five, the dual a(A)uthorial intent.

- theme. Use every element of your passage to illuminate and support the Point for Proclamation. The Point for Proclamation is relevant and redemptive in application.
3. Make your message transformational by including a catchphrase and anchor image (in other words, something auditory and something visual or something that people can see in their mind's eye) that will catch your listeners' attention so they can recall and be transformed by the message.<sup>4</sup>

What follows are the details of the development and testing of this method.

### **Phase 1—Project Design and Method Development**

This Thesis-Project proposed that preachers in Nigeria could learn to do basic contextual exegesis by concentrating their initial sermon preparation on considering whole books, focusing meditatively on large passages, and learning to consider key theological and contextual questions, all under the power of the Holy Spirit. In this way, I reasoned, their biblical knowledge as well as their spiritual growth would increase. I hoped it might be possible to provide this type of training in a basic introductory course in as little as one week. At that point preachers would be ready to incorporate the methods into their own preparation techniques. To this end I set out to decide on the primary goals necessary for the method.

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3. Anderson, *Thoughtful Proclaimer*, Location 4491-4499.

## Goals for Developing the Method

I set out to develop a process for teaching the basics needed to prepare biblical expository messages in one week. This method, I proposed, would be devotional in its personal and spiritual impact both on preachers with some level of formal theological training in theological exegesis as well as those with no formal training. To encompass this broad group, I designed my sermon preparation process to include many of the usual procedures included in classic textbooks for expository preaching.<sup>5</sup> I also set out additional goals and objectives specifically for teaching preaching in Nigeria to those who may not have had the benefit of formal training in biblical exegesis and theology.

Goal A was to teach people how to prepare a biblical expository message in order to counteract the proliferation of unbiblical theology.

Goal B was to do this using a dual authorial intent hermeneutic, which I named the Commander's Intent for purposes of teaching. The Commander's Intent is the central theme of the method I was developing, which I called the Thoughtful Proclaimer method. My intention was that the Commander's Intent and the Point for Proclamation which is developed from it would serve a similar role as Haddon Robinson's "Big Idea" in a sermon. Robinson wrote, "A sermon should be a bullet, not buckshot. Ideally each sermon is the explanation, interpretation,

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5. I based the basics of message preparation on methods gleaned from Haddon Robinson, *Biblical Preaching*.; Donald Sunukjian, Donald R. Sunukjian, *Invitation to Biblical Preaching: Proclaiming Truth with Clarity and Relevance, Invitation to Theological Studies Series* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2007). and Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching : Redeeming the Expository Sermon*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2018).

or application of a single dominant idea supported by other ideas, all drawn from one passage or several passages of Scripture.”<sup>6</sup>

One thing I set out to address was to give preachers clear stepping stones with which to cross the gap between text and sermon. Walter Kaiser once described this gap:

A gap of crisis proportions exists between the steps generally outlined in most seminary or Biblical training classes in exegesis and the hard realities most pastors face every week as they prepare their sermons. Nowhere . . . has the student been more deserted and left to his own devices than in bridging the yawning chasm between understanding the content of Scripture as it was given in the past and proclaiming it with such relevance in the present as to produce faith, life, and bona fide works. Both ends of this bridge have at various times received detailed and even exhaustive treatments: (1) the historical, grammatical, cultural, and critical analysis of the text forms one end of the spectrum; and (2) the practical, devotional, homiletical, and pastoral theology . . . But who has mapped out the route between these two points?<sup>7</sup>

The bridge across this gap, in the Thoughtful Proclaimer method, is the Commander’s Intent. The preacher is instructed to look for the author’s purposes for writing and then from there to decide on the Commander’s Intent for a passage based on what the rest of Scripture says concerning those purposes.

Goal C is to learn to use a method of inductive exegesis to discern the Commander’s Intent. I combined devotional, pastoral, and homiletical thought with historical, grammatical, and theological study into what I call contemplative theological inductive exegesis.<sup>8</sup> I designed

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6. Robinson, *Biblical Preaching*, Location 399.

7. Kaiser, *Toward an Exegetical Theology: Biblical Exegesis for Preaching and Teaching*, 18.

8. There are many books on how to do inductive Bible study that don’t necessarily propose to build a bridge across the gap but are aimed at personal or small group study and not in-depth contextual exegesis for sermon preparation. These books generally do not help one cross the gap between text and sermon. They generally focus most on textual meaning or small group Bible study. See especially Jen Wilkin, *Women of the Word: How to Study the Bible with Both our Hearts and Our Minds* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2014). Oletta Wald, *The Joy of Discovery in Bible Study*, Rev. ed. (Minneapolis: Augsburg Pub. House, 1975). *The Navigator Bible Studies Handbook*, Rev. ed. (Colorado Springs, Colo.: Navpress, 1994). Kay Arthur, *How to Study Your Bible* (Eugene, Or.: Harvest House Publishers, 1994).

worksheets to walk people through the initial learning phase of this kind of exegesis. First, I suggested devotional reading and meditation on the passage. This is followed by inductive question-and-answer-based exegesis that is both thought-provoking and spiritually edifying but also accomplishes basic historical, cultural, and rhetorical exegesis of the passage. Also, I incorporated some of Paul Scott Wilson's questions from his book *God Sense: Reading the Bible for Preaching* to add a theological dimension.<sup>9</sup> The inductive questions also consider audience and current-day cultural questions. Using this inductive study approach, supported by the worksheet questions, preachers can work their way step-by-step through the exegetical method from devotional reading through contextual study to homiletical proclamation.

Goal D comes from the problem Kaiser pointed out in the quote above, the disjunction between critical study of the text and pastoral care for a congregation. A little later he adds, "In effect, the proclaimer must exhibit in his own person the professional unity of the exegetical professor and the practical preacher."<sup>10</sup> So the method I developed sought to teach preachers to think like exegetes and yet to have the hearts of pastors by encouraging them to preach redemptively. By "preaching redemptively" I mean for the sermon to be two-pronged or doubly redemptive: aiming one arrow at offering eternal redemption and the other arrow at redeeming broken lives and comfort for those facing trials.<sup>11</sup>

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9. Paul Scott Wilson, *God Sense: Reading the Bible for Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2001).

10. Kaiser, *Toward an Exegetical Theology: Biblical Exegesis for Preaching and Teaching*, 22.

11. See Jesus' teaching to two audiences, seekers and Pharisees, in Luke 15; also the double redemptiveness the book of Ruth where there is a kinsman redeemer and the foreshadowing of the one Redeemer in the birth of Ruth and Boaz's son. See also Timothy J. Keller, *The Prodigal God: Recovering the Heart of the Christian Faith* (New York: Dutton, 2008).

In this redemptive view, the application is not based on personal effort or, what Bryan Chapell once called it, “*sola boostropsa*,” but is empowered by the Holy Spirit and motivated by a grateful response for what Christ has done for us on the cross, the atonement.<sup>12</sup> This is key, particularly in Nigeria where the prosperity gospel and the African traditional religious beliefs have left Christians with a transactional mindset whereby sermon application can be misconstrued as the thing one needs to do in order to earn God’s care and blessing.

Goal E is to persuade preachers of the importance of preaching on significant length passages. This encouragement to preach from longer passages not only helps to correct the unbiblical theology that can so easily grow from preaching on short passages, individual verses, and topics but also helps to counteract the temptation to take such passages out of context.

Kaiser once quipped,

So strong is this writer’s aversion to the methodological abuse he has repeatedly witnessed—especially in topical messages—that he has been advising his students for some years now to preach a topical sermon only once every five years—and then immediately to repent and ask God’s forgiveness! In case the reader does not recognize the hyperbole in that statement, then let me plainly acknowledge it as such. However, the serious note that lies behind this playfulness is a loud call for preaching that is totally Biblical in that it is guided by God’s Word in its origins, production, and proclamation.<sup>13</sup>

Goal F is to encourage the preacher to understand that the intent of the author in any single passage can be properly understood only as being part of the author’s larger intent for the whole book. The preacher must understand what the inspired author’s primary purposes

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12. Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching : Redeeming the Expository Sermon*, 371. Timothy Keller, “Preaching to the Heart,” *Builders Series: Audio Resources for Christian Leadership & Living*, South Hamilton, MA: Ockenga Institute of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, 2006. See also Chapter Four for the importance of the atonement.

13. Kaiser, *Toward an Exegetical Theology: Biblical Exegesis for Preaching and Teaching*, 19.

for his book were before he or she assumes they understand a smaller portion.<sup>14</sup> Thus the context for a single passage is its whole book. Following that, the context of a biblical author's intent is ultimately found only in the divine Author's intent, which is attested to in the rest of the Bible, the canon. This will lead to the dual a(A)uthorial intent (Commander's Intent), the search for which lies at the core of my proposed method.

Goal G is to recommend dependence throughout the process of sermon preparation on the Holy Spirit. For a preacher who has previously preached on a verse, story, or topic, this method can seem daunting and involves a significant amount of work, especially at the beginning. It is an important commitment for the Thoughtful Proclaimer to lean heavily on the Holy Spirit for help and wisdom in one's preparation. The proposed method was designed to promote an understanding that the Holy Spirit inspired the authors of the Scriptures and longs to empower us both to understand them and to proclaim them.

Preachers in Nigeria can be encouraged to see that both the following verses can rightly be applied together: "The Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you" (John 14:26) and "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Tim 2:15, KJV). Jesus left his disciples with the promise of the Holy Spirit. This same Spirit who inspired Scripture is by our side as we study, pray, and preach.<sup>15</sup>

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14. Jeffrey Arthurs, "Preaching the Literary Forms of the Bible."

15. Some people I have taught fear that biblical exegesis is about earthly knowledge, or "sense knowledge" in prosperity gospel lingo. So, the method I used explains that exegesis should be done under the power of the Holy Spirit. This combats the idea that some people can procure special "anointing" from the Spirit

Goal H is to develop a method of sermon preparation that aims to build up biblical knowledge and spiritual maturity in those who undertake the study. Sermon preparation should build you up rather than burning you out. By sequential preaching (Lectio Continua), canonical study (both of cross-references and the place of a passage in redemption history), and including the practice of spiritual disciplines in your message preparation method (meditating on your passage throughout the week, Sabbath keeping, and especially the living out of the Commander's Intent before attempting to preach it), the man or woman of God who seeks to preach will be growing more and more equipped to do so.

### Preparing Worksheets and Textbook

The next step in my project design was to prepare worksheets that walked the preacher through the steps of a method that would incorporate the above goals. The worksheets provided questions to spur thinking and lead the preacher through the process of exegesis and message preparation. They provide the backbone on which the textbook is written. They keep the thoughtful process moving from devotional reading and Spirit-guided contemplation through exegetical study of contexts and vocabulary. They then move to theological and redemptive thought and finally into the formation of a sermon. Each step of the process is spelled out. The thought that goes into the worksheets is deep but the steps that are taken to

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outside of what the Spirit already inspired in Scripture and that this anointing can be passed on by handkerchiefs and other artifacts in the way that Elijah's mantle was passed to Elisha (2 Kgs 2:1-14).

prepare the sermon are incremental; no one gets left behind. The assignment worksheets can be seen in Appendix A.

From the worksheets, I set out to write a textbook for use in training participants more generally. I set out certain parameters to guide my preparation of the textbook. First, it should be written at a high school reading level to be accessible to a broad global English-speaking audience. Second, the textbook should model good teaching. To this end, I included a memorable story or illustration to help participants remember the key point of each chapter. I added a devotional element to each chapter to help prevent the textbook from becoming simply an exercise in skill development. Finally, I added levity by sprinkling relevant humor throughout.

The result was the *Thoughtful Proclaimer: A Bottom-Up Guide to Preparing Bible Messages That Transform You from the Inside Out*. The complete textbook is readily available as a Kindle download, a softcover workbook, or as a rental textbook on some websites.<sup>16</sup> Although the 300+-page textbook is too long to be included here, the table of contents follows:

#### Section 1: Practical Preparation

1. Thoughtful Proclaimers Are Changed by the Word
2. Discover the Commander's Intent
3. Practice Inquisitive Exegesis
4. Plan Your Proclamation

#### Section 2: Listen: Contemplative, Inductive Theological Exegesis

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16. Elizabeth Anderson, *Thoughtful Proclaimer: A Bottom-Up Guide to Preparing Bible Messages that Transform You from the Inside Out* (Bloomington, IN: Westbow Press, 2017).

5. Listen! Listen!
6. Context, Context, Context
7. Dig Deep—Idea Level
8. Dig Deep—Word Level

#### Section 3: Live: A Transformative Hermeneutic

9. Consider the Audience: Cultural Context
10. Decide on the Commander's Intent
11. Let It Percolate

#### Section 4: Love: A Redemptive, Purposeful Homiletic

12. Redemptive Proclamation
13. Make It Memorable: The Point for Proclamation

### **Phase 2—Method Use and Evaluation**

After setting the goals for the proposed method of teaching preaching, preparing the worksheets, and writing the textbook, the next phase of this project was to test the proposed method to see if it accomplished the stated objectives. This phase consisted of using the textbook and worksheets in seminars and having participants evaluate the effectiveness of the method and their personal growth. Part of the evaluation of the efficacy of the method, in a sense, is for the participants to put into practice what they are learning by working through the inductive exegesis worksheets and preparing a sermon.

To further prepare for the teaching component of the seminars in Phase 2, I took the Teaching Preaching course at Gordon-Conwell and sat in as an observer in the Preacher's College course presented by the Gordon-Conwell Center for Preaching.<sup>17</sup> Using what I learned in these courses and the method in the *Thoughtful Proclaimer* textbook, I prepared several syllabi for teaching the method in a three-day, five-day, or fifteen-week format. (See appendices B and D for the syllabi used in the seminars tested.)

I then proceeded to run three preaching seminars based on the method. Seminar One was a shorter proof-of-concept seminar held in the United States and was limited to three days and five participants. Seminar Two was also held in the United States and consisted of a five-day seminar with ten participants. Seminar Three was a five-day seminar with forty participants held in Abuja, Nigeria. Seminars Two and Three shared a syllabus and general timeline.

### Evaluating Participant Development in Seminars One, Two, and Three

This Thesis-Project proposed to test whether the participants learned the basics, as I laid them out, of preparing authorial-intent-based expository sermons in one week using extensive evaluations, based on the goals. These evaluations sought to determine if the participants felt they had gained in their understanding of how to prepare biblical expository sermons. The achievement of the learning goals for the seminar was tested using self-reporting on these forms (see appendices C, E, and F). My purpose was not necessarily to grade the participant's sermons (though I evaluated them individually) but to assess whether the participants felt they

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17. Scott Gibson and John Tornfelt, *PR930 Teaching Preaching* (Gordon-Conwell Seminary: 2017).

understood the material, felt they could incorporate it into a sermon, and believed that they had grown in the areas of concern. For those who came to the seminars with no theological training, there was a lot to take in within a short time span.

I wrote a series of evaluation questions that covered the goals I had set out. They worked by asking related questions in several different ways, such as yes or no, short answer, and multiple answer (for example “none,” “a little,” “a lot”) to judge how the participants would reply. Personal development in preparation skills was what I counted as success, although I was listening to the sermons also to see if participants could incorporate what they had learned.

#### Seminar One—A Test Seminar

Seminar One was a preliminary test of the validity of my hypothesis. The training lasted for two days with the class returning on the third morning to preach and do extensive evaluations and discussion. The results were very encouraging. Two of the three messages were solid expository messages. This was a surprise, especially considering the short amount of time they had to prepare (only two nights). One person preached a sermon, another person gave a message styled as a youth group Bible story, and another gave an inspirational message for a mothers’ group. The participants had about the same level of speaking experience, which was quite limited. These three messages were evaluated using a sermon rubric. The anonymous results of the rubrics are at the end of Appendix C. In brief, I concluded that the training accomplished its goals.

The most important result of this seminar was the profound difference it made in several people's lives. One participant credited Seminar One for giving her the self-confidence to move into a new career; she went from being a Children's Ministry Administrative Assistant to being the Associate Children's Minister based on the fact that she had more assurance in the accuracy and truth of her Bible teaching. Another person went from being the church secretary to enrolling in her denomination's lay pastor training which has allowed her to be ordained in her denomination and called as the assistant pastor of her church. She credited the seminar for starting her on the journey to better preaching, and she regularly sends me sermons, at ThoughtfulProclaimer.com Sermon Coach, for help and critique. Both of those participants credit the Thoughtful Proclaimer Seminar for the start of their journey into what they believed would be a more meaningful role in ministry.

One participant emailed, "I have been asking for something like this for at least 3 years. I want more!" Another wrote, "An amazing, thoughtful, educational, glorious three days! I learned so much with a great bunch of people. I can't say enough about it . . . So many can benefit from this, from all walks of life. Thank You!"

The results of the sermon rubric on the three participants who preached showed that two of the participants reached some mastery of the material.<sup>18</sup> One participant included 97 percent of the elements I suggested in their sermon. On the surveys, one participant claimed to increase their knowledge and ability moderately; the other two claimed a great deal of

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18. Note that the rubric was used only with Seminar One.

improvement in most areas.<sup>19</sup> (The full survey results can be found in Chapter Seven and Appendix C.)

### Seminar Two—A Five-Day Seminar in the United States

The second training seminar had ten participants: two seminary students from Gordon-Conwell's Center for Urban Ministries who had previous preaching experience in their churches, two recent graduates of Gordon-Conwell who came to see if this seminar would be useful in the new ministry they were establishing in Nigeria, a Young Life volunteer looking to move up to leadership where she would speak regularly, a lay preacher in a large church whose pastor had encouraged her to attend, a children's minister, and four other lay leaders in churches and Bible studies.

This second training seminar was held at a Christian conference center. Each participant had their own room. Three meals and snacks were provided daily. Audio-visual equipment was also provided. The overview of the entire five-day seminar is below. Note that Seminar Two and Seminar Three used the same basic syllabus and materials with only slight variations. (This syllabus is in Appendix D.) The teaching sessions generally followed the textbook (see below). There were worksheets for each night which contained the sample inductive questions and the steps for preparing a sermon. (The assignments worksheets are found in Appendix A.) As a result of having two extra days and nights, I was able to include more time for discussion and

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19. The results for this first seminar are listed here and in Appendix C. The actual evaluation forms and results are available by request. The first seminar used a slightly different evaluation form than the subsequent seminars. Comments from the class caused me to change the forms slightly.

add videos of preaching samples to demonstrate seminar points of emphasis. We also had a seasoned local pastor come and preach one morning to demonstrate an example of a good Thoughtful Proclaimer expository sermon. (We will walk through Seminar Three at the close of this chapter after we have reviewed the basic methods used in both Seminars Two and Three.)

### **Method Overview for Both Five-Day Seminars (Seminars Two and Three)**

The Thoughtful Proclaimer seminars are primarily based on the premise that, the most important thing for preachers to do is to find God's intent, the Commander's Intent, for inspired Scripture and for that to transform their own lives. Message preparation is first and foremost messenger preparation. For the second and third seminars I divided the program into the four primary segments that make up the textbook, which are "Practical Preparation," "Listen to the Word," "Live the Message," "Love Others by Preaching Well." The reader can refer to the Table of Contents in the *Thoughtful Proclaimer* textbook and the Assignment Worksheets and Syllabi in Appendixes A and D.

A brief overview of what was covered each day follows.

#### ***Day One—Message Preparation Begins with Messenger Preparation***

Day One included spiritual preparation for preaching and how to read the Word. This was where participants began the contemplative work by learning how to ask good questions of a text and to immerse themselves in a text for some time before attempting to prepare a sermon on it. They were instructed to read their passage many times, in different translations, including one in their "mother tongue." They practiced Lectio Divina. The participants were

instructed to use the worksheets as a guide. The idea is to hear God speak to them from his Word.<sup>20</sup>

Two key things on Day One that I also emphasized were the importance of understanding the book-length context of any one passage and the importance of authorial intent, specifically God, the Commander's Intent for a passage. The participants ended the class day having chosen a text to preach on and with a worksheet to guide them through the initial reading, listening, meditating, and questioning.

### *Day Two—Listen: Thinking Exegetically for Accurate Bible Messages*

On Day Two, we discussed rhetorical organization of texts and vocabulary. The contexts for a passage which they learned to consider were the whole book of the Bible, surrounding passages, the whole Bible, cross references (with warnings about the use of cross references and keeping the primary passage in charge), literary genre, historical and cultural setting, the context of the gospel as a whole, and the story of redemptive history.

Participants learned to look at how the author organized his ideas or wrote his plot. They learned how to do a basic original language word study. They outlined their passage and studied the key vocabulary in the evening. They each wrote a paraphrase of their passage. The final goal of Day Two homework was to begin to consider what the Commander's Intent of their passage was.

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20. Lectio divina is an ancient technique for listening to God speak to us in Scripture. It is a sacred way of reading Scripture in the context of contemplative prayer.

### *Day Three—Live: A Transformative Hermeneutic*

Day Three was focused on personally living out the Commander's Intent. We discussed the importance of Sabbath rest for preachers and preaching. We talked about exegeting one's audience and their cultural beliefs, needs, and issues. And we considered what God's purpose is for them to preach from this passage. God's purpose is what I call the Point for Proclamation.

The method I used is called "thoughtful," thus the thoughtful parts are important to how it works. On Day Three everyone is sent out for a walk for about 45 minutes in order to practice solitude and so they have time to imagine what their passage was like when it was preached or when it happened. They were instructed to look around them for illustrations for their message.<sup>21</sup> In the afternoon we discussed various kinds of sermon structures, introductions, conclusions, memorable catch phrases, anchor images, and powerful illustrations.

### *Day Four—Love Others by Preaching Redemptively*

On Day Four, we discussed what I call "redemptive purposeful proclamation" using the stories from Luke 15, which Jesus told to the lost tax collectors and sinners along with the Pharisees and scribes. We discussed the essential redemptive purposes of God for believers and unbelievers; the idea of two redemptive foci in our message application. We talked about the idea that preaching is a three-way conversation between preacher, congregant, and the Holy

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21. It should be noted that several participants in Seminar Two as well as Three found the walk outside to be one of the most valuable parts of the method as it either gels the Commander's Intent for them or allows them to see illustrations of it around them.

Spirit. I explained what I call “preaching grace, not rules” and the benefits of a grateful heart response as motivation for transformation.

I reminded them that part of “loving others” is to make sure to have a point and make that point clearly. They are encouraged to give their sermon a “hair cut” or final edit when it is done so that every part of the sermon; every illustration, opening, conclusion points to the Point for Proclamation. The evening was spent writing, editing, and practicing their sermons.

#### *Day Five—Sharing Sermons*

Day Five was spent sharing sermons and completing surveys of the seminar content, and discussing and commenting on the course. In Seminar Two, the participants had vastly different levels of experience, from absolutely none to Master of Divinity degrees. Some were regular speakers or preachers whereas others had never presented a biblical message. I used a basic rubric for Seminar Two which can be seen in Appendix E. It should be noted that the sermons in Seminar Three in Nigeria were not evaluated with the full sermon rubric for practical reasons. Instead, self-evaluation was the primary tool depended upon for the results of the study. Seminar Three is discussed below.

In both Seminar Two and Three I provided private, personal written responses for each participant based on my understanding of their ability and recommended areas for future development. All seminar participants were offered sermon coaching for at least four sermons after the training. In this way those who wanted to avail themselves of more training and evaluation of their sermons could do so.

## Preliminary Seminar Two Results

I will go into details in Chapter Seven regarding the results of the Seminars, but for now it is important to know that 100 percent of the participants of Seminar Two felt the inductive theological exegesis method helped them improve their message preparation and planned to use it in the future. The most significant result of that seminar, as far as this thesis is concerned, was that participants Grace and Emmanuel Muhammed felt the seminar and textbook would be very useful in Nigeria and invited me to come to Nigeria and teach the Thoughtful Proclaimer method there through their school, Hebron Home.

## Seminar Three in Nigeria

The third seminar was then held in Abuja, Nigeria. The reader will recall that the Thesis-Project's primary aim has been to teach Nigerian preachers how to prepare biblical expository sermons based on God's intent in order to counteract unbiblical theology.

Seminar Three was held in a hotel meeting space. There were forty participants registered and several others came to observe. We served lunch in the classroom each day to save time, but participants traveled back and forth from their homes each morning and evening. Many traveled from long distances taking several forms of public transportation. This caused us to start late many mornings and made attendance variable.

Seminar Three followed the same syllabus as Seminar Two. At least a third of those who filled in the surveys in Nigeria indicated that they had post-secondary Bible school or seminary

training. However, several noted during classroom discussion that they did not read the Bible regularly except for the purpose of finding a verse or story for preaching.

The range of life experience of the Seminar Three participants in Nigeria was great as well. I have already given a general introduction to the careers of those in Seminar Two. In Seminar Three, for example, we had a missionary who worked with tribal people in a rural area where African traditional religions were practiced. We had people who were Muslim converts who were very serious about their faith and learning this method but who did not have in depth Christian background. We had young people whose ambitions were to study American-style preaching but not necessarily to learn lengthy procedures on how to study the Bible. We had people from an “orphanage” that cares for children who have been abandoned by their families as “witches.” We also had some pastors with years of experience preaching and leading churches. And we had quite a few participants who were students from Hebron Home’s Leadership Training Program.

### **Differences between Seminars Two and Three**

Since there was more of a language barrier in Seminar Three than Seminar Two, and because Seminar Three participants commuted each day while Seminar Two participants overnighted on-site, a few modifications were necessary for Seminar Three. For example, less time was spent on original language word studies in Nigeria. Most did not have computers or tablets and so used pen and paper. However, I was able to show them good online tools they could use with smart phones. At the first two seminars I provided people with ESV Study Bibles at the beginning which they could take home. At Seminar Three, due to the variable

attendance, the participants who had attended all classes and preached were given NIV Study Bibles after the close of the classes. So, the Nigerian preachers did not have the introductory commentary to the books they were preaching on.

Additionally, there were other benefits of Seminar Two that Seminar Three did not have. Since Seminar Two met at a conference center and we ate three meals a day together, we had time to discuss our learning at meals and to work together during the evenings. There was a collegial atmosphere in Seminar Two. I was always available for questions.

There was less of a collegial atmosphere, in some ways, in Seminar Three because of the variable attendance and also because I was an “outsider” who they called “Mama Liz.” This brought some distance and less of a community atmosphere. Because of this social distance, and also because of an awkward room set-up with a very long rectangular table and me at the far end there was less free flow of discussion in the large group.

During the giving of sermons, there was also a language barrier in Seminar Three. Listening to the sermons required all my concentration because of the participants’ heavily accented presentations, and in some cases, there were portions I could not understand. The use of a sermon rubric under these circumstances was not practically feasible. For these reasons, having the participants evaluate themselves and the seminars based on their own perceived learning was best. However, I was able to individually write informal evaluations for each person using pen and paper.

### **Seminar Three General Results**

The seminar in Nigeria, Seminar Three, was the final test of this Thesis-Project. Was I able to teach preachers in Nigeria to prepare expository sermons using an inductive dual authorial hermeneutic? Out of forty participants, sixteen preached and sixteen answered the surveys.

The participants who took the survey were generally very positive: 94 percent believed that inductive exegesis had helped them with their message preparation, 100 percent said they plan to use it in the future, and 100 percent of the participants found the idea of the Commander's Intent helpful for their sermon preparation. The full results are in Appendix F.

In general, the Nigerians were more appreciative of the training opportunity than those in the United States, as a reader will see by comparing the written comments to those in Seminar Two (see appendices E and F). Two constructive comments in the Nigerian seminar were: "I think that more time should be given to the seminar so there can be more discussions during the seminar in order to bring out the best of the course." Another recommended spreading the word to others: "The seminar is perfectly okay, but as aforesaid, there [should have been] more awareness or to announce it very well, or to be taking it to locations if possible. Many pastors may like to come but transportation may be a hindrance factor."

Many others commented positively: "Thoughtful Proclaimer seminar made me discover who I am in terms of message preparation." "Very good and impactful." "The Thoughtful Proclaimer seminar is sure a great blessing to me and it increased my confidence in presenting my message now. Thank you for coming our way." "The Thoughtful Proclaimer seminar is very

impactful seminar that has really changed my message mentality. And also make me to understand that before I preach, I have work to do.”

The most seasoned pastor gave the most thoughtful response (this was a verbal response). He said that at first, seeing the method, he had been very sad. He said it made him feel like he had been “doing it all wrong.” But, after working through the method step-by-step he realized his sermon was better than it would have otherwise been. He was very grateful and planned to continue to use the new tools he had learned.

In general, I felt the Thesis-Project was a success as far as people learning the importance of expository preaching for authorial intent and how to prepare that type of message. I am blessed to have been part of the growth these preachers and teachers showed. All in all, I believe the seminar was very valuable and should continue and expand with some changes. The question of whether or not unbiblical theology in the pulpit can be addressed in the span of one week will be addressed in Chapter Seven.

CHAPTER SEVEN

OUTCOMES AND THE FUTURE

OF THE THOUGHTFUL PROCLAIMER SEMINARS

The primary aim of this Thesis-Project was to teach Nigerian preachers to prepare biblical expository sermons based on God's intent as demonstrated in a particular biblical author's inspired writing. The goal has been to prevent preachers from delivering messages with unbiblical theology. In order to accomplish this goal, I set out a step-by-step method using an inductive Bible study style exegesis method which aimed to find the authorial intent and apply it in a redemptive and canonical way. The importance of the project can be seen in Scott Sundquist's words, "Jesus has only one plan and that is the Church. There is no alternative plan."<sup>1</sup> The necessity of the church for God's operation in the world is what makes it so important to preach accurately and well.

**Outline of Seminar Objectives Evaluated**

In order to achieve a reduction in unbiblical theology and improve the biblical focus of preaching, I set out primary objectives which were necessary to accomplish as a result of the Thoughtful Proclaimer seminars in Chapter Six under "Goals for Developing the Method." The

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1. Scott W. Sunquist, *Why Church: A Basic Introduction* (Downer's Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2019), 9.

participants themselves evaluated whether the Thoughtful Proclaimer method accomplished these goals. They are set out again below in brief:

A) As a result of these seminars participants will prepare biblical expository sermons

B) As a result of these seminars, participants will understand how to prepare sermons based on the Commander's Intent (dual authorial intent) and focused into a single "Point for Proclamation."

C) As a result of these seminars participants will practice an inductive, question and answer-based method of exegesis, to study contexts such as biblical/redemptive context, historical/cultural, literary/rhetorical, and also audience exegesis.

D) As a result of these seminars participants will preach redemptive sermons. By which I mean sermons that offer redemption; eternal redemption because of Jesus Christ's death on the cross and also redemption and rescue for broken and hurting people (Rom 5:10). Included in this is redemptive sermon application, meaning that the motivation for suggested application is based on a grateful response to Christ's work of redemption on the cross and is to be accomplished by the empowerment of the promised the Holy Spirit.

E) As a result of these seminars, participants will choose to preach on significant length passages such as whole chapters or multiple chapters preached sequentially as opposed to individual verses, paragraphs, or topics.

F) As a result of these seminars participants will consider first the author's intent for his entire book as the primary context for any individual passage preached.

G) As a result of these seminars, preachers will depend on the power of the Holy Spirit to give them grace and wisdom for their preparation and study of the Scriptures since it is he

who inspired them. In line with this, preachers will not merely expect the Spirit's empowerment in the pulpit without having done the exegetical and theological work in study but will seek the Spirit's empowerment throughout the process.

H) As a result of these seminars participants will learn a method of sermon preparation that enhances their spiritual growth and increases their biblical knowledge.

I) As a result of these seminars, preachers will perceive improvement in their ability to prepare biblical sermons and to preach.

### **Evaluation of the Accomplishment of the Objectives**

As noted in Chapter Six, I conducted three seminars. Each seminar covered the same material, but as indicated below, I evaluated each somewhat differently.

Seminar One, the smaller "proof of concept" seminar in the United States, was judged in at least four different ways. First, the participants did a practical evaluation of the process by working through the exegesis worksheets to prepare their sermons. In this way they evaluated the effectiveness of the process. Second, each sermon was assessed using a rubric that covered the above objectives. The rubric is at the end of the syllabus in Appendix B. The participants personally evaluated one another's sermons as well. Third, each participant filled out a questionnaire at the end of the seminar highlighting their perceptions of what they had learned. Finally, the questionnaire allowed the participants to give their opinions regarding the effectiveness of the method, the quality of teaching, and the needed improvements of the seminar. The questionnaire is in Appendix C.

I also judged Seminar Two in the United States in four different ways with minor variations from Seminar One. First, the participants did a practical evaluation of the process by working through the in-depth exegesis worksheets themselves to see if it was effective in helping them prepare their sermons. Second, their sermons were assessed by me, using a simplified rubric that included objectives A through E, above. The participants also evaluated one another's sermons verbally. Third, each participant filled out a questionnaire at the end of the seminar highlighting their perceptions of what they had learned. Finally, the questionnaire allowed the participants to evaluate the seminar itself including the method, the teaching, and any needed improvements. I concluded the seminar with a discussion of the seminar process, the method, and any feedback the participant had.

I held the third definitive Seminar in Nigeria and again used four criterion for evaluation. First, the participants did a practical evaluation of the process by working through the in-depth exegesis worksheets to prepare their sermons. Second, I assessed each sermon informally without a rubric (as explained in the section Assessment of Sermons). Third, each participant filled out a questionnaire at the end of the seminar highlighting their perceptions of what they had learned, including their perceptions of the method, etc. I used the same evaluation questionnaire from Seminar Two with some slight improvements in wording. The results are in Appendix F. Sixteen of the 40 class participants (25 to 35 on any given day), returned their confidential evaluations to me the next week via the seminar coordinator. Though 25 had signed up to preach, only 16 actually preached. I will discuss the sermons below.

The results of the confidential development and seminar evaluations of all of three seminars taken together were overwhelmingly positive. All tabulated survey results can be

found in Appendices C, E, and F. In general, the survey results suggest that more of this type of training would be appreciated, especially in Nigeria.<sup>2</sup>

### Seminar One: General Outcomes

The results of Seminar One evaluations were informative because they showed the transformation that offering this type of training can bring to people who are called by God to preach or teach. The training encouraged two of the three people who spoke to realize their dream for further ministry. It should be noted that a fourth person did not preach or answer the survey questions and quite often slept through the lectures and discussion. He was disappointed in the seminar because he had hoped “Thoughtful Proclaimer” meant that he would be learning how to access the power of the Holy Spirit in the pulpit without the need for so much work beforehand. The fifth person who attended Seminar One was a Christian ministry consultant who did not preach but came to help me evaluate how the seminar was run, to give advice, and to critique the method. This person did interact with the discussion and otherwise was a full member of the seminar. The complete results can be seen in Appendix C.

The key outcome from Seminar One evaluations was that all three participants who preached and filled in the surveys felt more confident and were more satisfied with their ability to prepare a biblical message after taking the course. One participant who was less biblically

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2. There may be a cultural predisposition to positive affirmation that I am not aware of. Previous seminars I have given in the United States did not have such strongly positive results. But the Nigerian surveys did contain helpful comments and they did note what they did not like and where they would recommend change. The combination of positive and negative feedback suggests the results are reliable in spite of this possible cultural tendency.

knowledgeable than the others reported that she was still a little unsure her message would be accurate as to Scripture. They all felt the method was more spiritually edifying than their previous method of preparing a message. One said the repeated reading of Scripture to find the Commanders intent made it more spiritually edifying. Another felt the beginning steps of praying, reading, immersing, studying, and researching the Word helped the method be spiritually edifying. The third believed that the idea of speaking as God's mouthpieces gave them more responsibility to be accurate in what they said, and they found that spiritually edifying.

As to what things they found helpful for message preparation, they replied that the discovery of the structure of the passage was helpful. Another wrote that the breakdown of the steps leading to the "Commander's Intent" and "Point for Proclamation" was helpful. The third found the worksheet questions were thought provoking, though she had not been able to complete all of the questions within the short timeframe allowed (which was expected).

The participants said the seminar would be helpful for teachers of youth and college students, "lay" teachers of adults, teachers in non-ordaining denominations, youth leaders, small group leaders, parachurch youth organizations, and volunteers who run youth groups or other Christian groups but do not have formal theological education. One participant felt it would be helpful for the elders and ministry leaders in their church.

Finally, regarding completion of the objectives listed at the beginning of this chapter, the evaluation indicates that all three participants report completing them to some degree. (The answers were on the following scale— A) No Improvement, B) A Little Bit of Improvement, C) Some Improvement, D) Moderate Improvement, and E) A Great Deal of Improvement). The

participants stated they also found everything listed in the syllabus helpful to them. This group did not have any other formal theological training or sermon preparation training, though they were biblically literate to varying degrees.

### Seminars Two and Three: Evaluating the Achievement of the Objectives

The discussion below is based on the evaluation forms from the five-day Seminars (Seminars Two and Three). I will offer the results organized as to our objectives/goals. Note that the evaluation forms were organized by (1) exegetical skills, (2) hermeneutical skills, (3) homiletical skills, (4) spiritual edification, (5) general questions-short answer, and (6) the seminar itself-short answer.

Regarding Goal A, the ability of participants to prepare biblical expository sermons: 90% of the total participants from Seminars Two and Three reported they had moderate to a great deal more confidence and/or were more satisfied with the accuracy of their sermons. 100% of respondents in those same seminars felt that the Thoughtful Proclaimer method had given them some confidence in the accuracy of their sermons. 88% of Nigerians who responded reported a great deal more confidence.

The fact that some preachers in Seminar Three had not previously considered preparing a sermon based on studying a passage of the Bible at all, but rather prepared their sermons on individual verses or Bible stories, indicates some success. Emmanuel Muhammed reports that

the training changed people's perceptions of what a sermon is.<sup>3</sup> I believe this is because many people had not considered expository preaching in the past.

Regarding Goal B, whether the idea of finding the Commander's Intent was helpful for deciding on the point of their sermon: 100% of the participants in both Seminars reported that it was helpful. And 100% said they planned to use the paradigm of a Commander's Intent in their future message preparation. 100% of U.S. participants and 94% of Nigerian participants felt the Thoughtful Proclaimer method had helped them arrive at the biblical author's intent for their passage.

Regarding Goal C, whether the participants found the inductive worksheets valuable, and would use them in the future: 100% of the respondents from Seminar Two answered in the affirmative to all three questions. In Nigeria, the results were more complicated. Whereas 94 % said the worksheets helped with the preparation, only 81% said they found the inductive theological exegesis to be a better method than their previous methods of sermon preparation. Even so, 100% planned to use some form of inductive theological exegesis in the future, though only 75% planned to use the Thoughtful Proclaimer worksheets. Since the Thoughtful Proclaimer worksheets are meant to teach people how to develop their own exegetical thinking this may be justified.

100% of the Nigerians felt they learned about the importance of contexts for understanding Scripture and 100% of them said they will study context in a different way now.

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3. Emmanuel Muhammed, Personal Communication, April 10, 2022.

Finally, 100% of the Nigerians felt their exegetical skills had improved after studying the Thoughtful Proclaimer method.

In the United States the number of affirmative responses to goal C was slightly lower, perhaps owing to the fact that four of the ten participants had some level of theological training already. 80% felt that they were *just learning* about the importance of context and 80% thought they would study the Bible *differently* now that they heard about “Contextual Signposts.” (Presumably, 20% felt they understood how to study biblical context because of their previous theological training.) 100% reported their exegetical skills were improved after studying the Thoughtful Proclaimer method.

Regarding Goal D, preaching messages aimed at both the believer with the broken life and the unbeliever who did not know Jesus: 100% of the participants in both Seminars felt they had gained valuable insight regarding redemptive sermons. And 100% of the respondents in both Seminars understood the idea of motivating transformation based on a “heart response” to Christ’s love and sacrifice.

This is significant in Nigeria where the influence of the African Traditional Religion and prosperity gospel perspectives of “giving to get” have emphasized wealth as the objective of faith rather than such objectives as a closer relationship with Christ, a response of worship for one who gave his life, the notion of undeserved blessing, or even the responsibility of being blessed to bless others. Interestingly, one preacher’s final sermon used the catchphrase, “You have to connect to collect.” Perhaps he was one of those who did not respond to this question—12% of Nigerians did not respond either yes or no to the question of motivating

application by way of grateful response. Conceivably, the cultural/theological disconnect between their prior mindset and this new one was too large to overcome in one seminar.

The second part of goal D was to encourage Holy Spirit-empowerment for living out sermon. It should be noted that the sermons in Seminar Three in Nigeria were not evaluated with the full sermon rubric. Instead, self-evaluation was the primary tool depended upon for the results of the study. 100% of those in Seminar Two in the U. S. said they understood a Spirit-empowered application. But, in Nigeria, only 94% said they understood this concept. I think this possibly brings up, again, the fact that there is a different theological/cultural view of “works” vs. “grace” in some people in Nigeria.

Regarding Goal E, encouraging preachers to choose passages of significant length so as to honor the author and also to prevent preaching on a single topic or one or two verses: 80% of people in the United States said they had increased in appreciation for this idea. I did not have a question on the evaluation forms to clarify whether the 20% who answered “no” did so because the Thoughtful Proclaimer method failed to convince them or whether they did so because they were already convinced of the importance of using passages of significant length before the seminar. In Nigeria however, 75% said they had an increased appreciation for choosing significant length passages. I observed that about 25% still chose to preach on a verse or two, even though all of the passages I gave them were much longer. As with the U.S., I did not clarify why the 25% in Nigeria said no, but my observations and discussions seemed to indicate that unlike the U.S. participants who possibly were indicating they already knew this, the Nigerians were likely indicating they were unconvinced of the need to change their former methods.

Regarding Goal F, considering the author's intent for his entire book as a primary context for a passage: my evaluation forms failed to collect the data. Though this context is a primary goal of my teaching and it was frequently discussed in the seminars, I inadvertently missed adding a direct question on this subject in my evaluation. However, in Seminar Two, one person wrote in that they plan to consider the author's intent for his whole book as context when they prepare sermons in the future. They said they would consider the Commander's Intent for the whole book first, then the Commander's Intent of the chapter, and then the Commander's Intent of the passage.

Regarding Goal G, helping preachers to depend on the Holy Spirit at home in their study as they prepare their message: 95% of the participants in Seminars Two and Three combined reported learning new ways to listen to the Word of God. In Nigeria, that seemed to be the end of the matter. However, in the United States the participants had a lot to say regarding the benefit of the Holy Spirit and a more thoughtful preparation method. They mentioned the use of Lectio Divina, letting the passage speak to them first, spending time with God while they studied the passage, allowing the passage to transform them, and preparing the message from their heart not only the text. They reported that the passage had become part of them, they had a personal encounter with Scripture, and that their personal response flowed naturally to the sermon. And one person reported that letting the Scripture and the Holy Spirit drive the message was new for them. The idea of "listening" and "hearing" were often mentioned. During discussion, participants indicated that they appreciated the built-in transformation time, Sabbath time, and taking time to "percolate."

One goal of the Thoughtful Proclaimer, Goal H, was that the method should be more spiritually edifying than the sermon preparation they had used in the past. Everyone who responded in Seminars Two and Three said that the Thoughtful Proclaimer method was somewhat more spiritually edifying than their previous way of preparing a message. In the United States, 30% felt that there was a great deal of improvement over their previous methods. But 60% of those in Nigeria claimed “a great deal of improvement” in the spiritual edification over other preparation methods. This is significant because our discussion suggested that at a good percentage of those responding were pentecostal or charismatic and had previously depended on the Holy Spirit to give them their messages.

In the United States, participants indicated that the most spiritually edifying parts of the technique were “listening to the Holy Spirit” and “listening to the Word.” Four separate people wrote in those responses. Three wrote in that Sabbath keeping was spiritually edifying and others mentioned Lectio Divina and applying the passage to themselves first. In Nigeria, people weren’t as forthcoming about “writing in” narrative answers to any questions in general. Ten of the Nigerian participants didn’t write anything. But, on this topic, there were four Nigerian participants who specifically wrote in that the redemptive aspects were spiritually edifying, as well as being “changed by the Word,” and “listening.”

Another part of goal H was to increase biblical knowledge. No one reported an increase in biblical knowledge over the course of one week. However, the fact that 75 % of the participants of Seminar Three (Nigeria) plan to use the Thoughtful Proclaimer worksheets means they will continue to learn about the Bible beyond the time of the seminar. And finding that 50% had not considered the author’s intent of a passage before and now 100% of them

plan to, is also a positive move in the biblical direction. 100% learned more about and 100% plan to study biblical contexts now when preparing a message. This indicates a clear likelihood of increased biblical knowledge. In the workshops, some participants indicated that in the past, they only chose a verse or story and didn't study a full passage. So, though they might not have noticed growth in biblical understanding from preparing one sermon, if they use the method (and especially if they preach sequentially), there will be some movement towards increasing biblical knowledge.

Finally, the most general goal, Goal I, was that as a result of the seminar the participants would sense an improvement in their ability to preach: 100% of the participants in the seminar felt their preaching or Bible teaching would be better as a result of the seminar. In the U.S., 50% felt it would be "much better" while in Nigeria 75% felt it would be "much better."

### **Assessment of the Sermons**

#### **Seminar One**

Two out of the three messages in Seminar One were good Thoughtful Proclaimer messages according to the rubric at the end of Appendix B. I assessed each of the sermons using a rubric to evaluate whether the participants had learned the above objectives in a usable way. Two of the three messages were not styled as sermons; one was a Bible teaching for young teens and another was an inspirational talk for mothers. This demonstrated the flexibility of the method for preparing different types of messages.

Both of those messages were expository according to the definition set out in this Thesis.<sup>4</sup> Astoundingly, one participant, who had never taught before and who claimed to have very little biblical background, prepared a message in two nights that covered 93% of the topics on the rubric and the objectives. It was an applicable and meaningful message on one passage with one primary topic based on both the author and the Author's intent. It was a Bible teaching aimed at eighth grade youth.

The other participant, who gave the encouraging and entertaining expository message aimed at mothers of babies and young children, though she was a somewhat more experienced speaker, had never set out to give an expository Bible message before. Yet, she gave a very entertaining and transformative message for mothers and hit 97% of the topics on the rubric.

Speaker three was a lay preacher with the most preaching experience. Despite having the most experience, her sermon met only 76% of the criteria on the rubric. This third message was not expository, according to our definition, though styled as a sermon.<sup>5</sup> However, this person has gone on to study theology and to be ordained to ministry. She now preaches regularly and works to improve her messages. She puts in the continuing effort to preach expository sermons well now. She has developed her own style of message which is always redemptive.

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4. If the reader will recall from the preceding chapters, the view this Thesis takes of expository preaching is an ambassadorial proclamation of God's reconciling intent for the world portrayed in the original inspired author's intent as observed in a passage's rhetorical, historical, and canonical setting.

5. The third sermon of Seminar One aimed at being topical and evangelistic but had several topics and no clear point and no clear structure, but several applications on several passages.

## Seminar Two

There were ten messages in Seminar Two. They were also varied as to type, and yet each one was an expository biblical message. We were blessed with a first-person narrative, several messages styled as Bible study teachings, a children's message, some general-purpose expository sermons, an evangelistic youth message (known as a Young Life "cross talk"), and even an expository topical message.

It should be noted that two of the ten preachers said that their senior pastor always assigned them topics, rather than passages, to preach on. One of the preachers not only came with an assigned topic but their senior pastor also assigned a sermon structure which she had to use.<sup>6</sup> This gave her a good opportunity to at least hear different types of structures and also, she learned how a message based on the Commander's Intent is, in a sense topical yet expository at the same time. In this way we were able to discuss expository topical messages based on a primary passage whose Commander's Intent is the topic you were assigned.

Interestingly, as in Seminar One above, there was no indication of correlation between previous theological education and ability to meet the Thoughtful Proclaimer criteria in sermons. I noted that where the people had less seminary training, their preaching fully incorporated the Thoughtful Proclaimer method into their sermons, whereas some people who preach regularly and had theological degrees, added only one or two Thoughtful Proclaimer goals to their messages. My observations and discussions with participants indicated that those

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6. This participants church's sermons all used Andy Stanley's "Me-We-God-You-We" narrative structure. See Elizabeth Anderson, *Thoughtful Proclaimer: A Bottom-Up Guide to Preparing Bible Messages that Transform You from the Inside Out* (Bloomington, IN: Westbow Press, 2017), Location 4888 or Andy Stanely and Lane Jones, *Communicating for a Change: Seven Keys to Irresisable Communication* (Colorado Springs, CO: Multnomah, 2008).

with less experience tried harder to follow the model while those with more training and experience were reticent to learn a new style and change their approach.<sup>7</sup>

For Seminar Two, the rubric included the first five of our primary outcomes. The somewhat simplified rubric allowed me to also take detailed notes. I also wrote each participant a letter telling them what they did well, positive things I noticed about their sermons or preparation, and one thing they might focus on improving next time. I did not give the rubrics to the participants as they were for my use only. I was very clear with the participants that the seminar was for their advancement and my research, and they were not being “graded” in any way. (This was a pre-condition for several of the participants to agree to come.) The rubric I used contained these key objectives: A) Participant prepared a biblical expository sermon. B) Sermons was based on the Commander’s Intent (dual a(A)uthorial intent) and focused into a single Point for Proclamation. C) Sermon exhibited evidence of contextual study and audience appropriateness. D) Sermon offered redemption in some form, either salvation or the offer of God’s grace and help. E) The participant chose a significant length passage. The scores ranged from 85 to 100%. Four out of the ten speakers covered 100% of those items well in their message.

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7. I noticed that some with little experience put in great effort whereas those with lots of experience seemed to put in less effort. I do not believe this has anything to do with the Thesis method, but rather it has to do with the reason someone has for attending the seminars.

The fact that those with graduate work in theology put less effort into learning the Thoughtful Proclaimer method was born out again later outside of this thesis, when I ran a pastor’s conference. It was billed as a Preaching Masterclass week, but the pastors came primarily for a retreat and not to learn a whole new method of preaching. None of the pastors who came preached expository messages and they weren’t really interested in learning how to prepare that type of message. Thus, they more or less came for a to discuss the pressures of being a pastor and preaching. In this fourth seminar I was unable to teach much due to lack of interest.

### Seminar Three

The sermons in Nigeria ranged from excellent to questionable in theology. The schedule in Nigeria for preaching was very tight. We had planned for 25 twelve-minute sermons scheduled back-to-back with three minutes between them for verbal comments. The schedule as planned, was from 10 AM to 5 PM with only a lunch break. Because of the intensity of the 5-day class, the large amount of overnight homework, and lengthy travel required for many participants daily, some were unable to finish their sermon preparation. In the end, only 16 preachers were willing to present their messages though I assumed others had started preparing them. I will comment on changes for the future below.

Unfortunately, many of the preachers' accents were very challenging for me to understand, so non-subjective sermon assessment with a rubric was not possible. Instead, the sermon assessment was based on the preacher's personal view of their development in using the method, rather than a sermon conforming to the Thoughtful Proclaimer method. However, since the Thesis-Project's proposed outcome was to acquire the tools for preparing biblical expository sermons, the detailed surveys were sufficient for measuring project success or failure.

Because the evaluations in all three seminars were confidential, I cannot know which evaluation form goes with which sermon. So, I could not evaluate the degree of correlation between the quality of the biblical exposition itself and the perception of the participant as to how well they understood the topics taught. I put a lot of trust in the participants to have a good understanding of their own achievement. Considering the narrative and written

comments responding to “short” answer questions, I believe that those who filled in the evaluation forms did a good job of self-assessment.

In Nigeria, as was the case in all three Seminars, my observations indicated that everyone who attempted a sermon gave the method their attention and put effort into their sermons. They all attempted to preach on a passage of scripture that I helped them choose. This was an accomplishment in and of itself because some were preaching from a biblical text rather than a story or verse for the first time.

Subjectively, I would judge that the messages were variable as to quality. As to the outcomes A-E, only one preacher fulfilled all five outcomes fully. His sermon was also very clear and engaging.<sup>8</sup> The rest of the preachers fulfilled outcome A to one extent or another by attempting to preach a biblical expository message.

Three preachers were so steeped in the prosperity gospel, however, that they seemed unable to escape that viewpoint and even after the training they saw their passage through that lens. I believe they lacked the biblical knowledge or perhaps they were less interested in preaching an expository sermon. Other than aiming to focus on a passage of scripture, these messages did not fit the objectives. It is true as well that some preachers have had not previously heard an expository sermon or had expository preaching modeled in their home churches. These preachers, I would say, at least fulfilled outcome C to the extent that they knew their usual audience well.

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8. The goals I was looking to accomplish with the Nigerian preachers were: A) Participant prepared a biblical expository sermon. B) Sermons was based on the Commander’s Intent (dual a(A)uthorial intent) and focused into a single “Point for Proclamation.” C) Sermon exhibited evidence of contextual study and audience appropriateness. D) Sermon offered redemption in some form, either salvation or the offer of God’s grace and help. E) Sermon was based on a significant length passage.

### Comments on Seminar Three for the Future

In review, Seminar Three had room for improvement. First, I should have asked the Hebron Home host, Emmanuel Muhammed, who understood the accents, who was from the same culture, who was familiar with the styles of preaching in Nigeria, and who had been through the Thoughtful Proclaimer training, to assist me in assessing each one with a simplified rubric in order to decrease subjectivity in the assessments.

Second, I should have had a full example of an expository redemptive sermon. In Seminar Two, you may recall, we had a preacher come and preach an expository “Thoughtful Proclaimer” approved message, but we had no such example for Seminar Three. Several Sundays before this I had heard a perfect Thoughtful Proclaimer expository message preached in Nigeria at an ECWA church.<sup>9</sup> In future, a live or recorded sermon by him or another preacher of his caliber could provide a useful example to participants.

In the future, in groups larger than ten people, the group should be divided, and each sub-group led by a trained leader. This would be a Nigerian who would evaluate the speaker based on objective criteria in a rubric format and who would record the message. This would allow for longer messages with more time in between. A Nigerian national can understand the preacher’s dialects better and would be able to fairly and consistently fill out the rubrics. If possible it would be helpful to have sermon recordings.

Despite the limitations noted above, according to the survey results and comments we discussed in the preceding section, “Evaluation of the Accomplishment of the Objectives,”

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9. ECWA (Evangelical Church Winning All) is a denomination in Africa that began in West Africa (formerly Evangelical Church of West Africa). They have a seminary in Jos, Nigeria. They are a partner church of SIM (formerly Sudan Interior Mission now Serving in Mission)

Seminars Two and Three were successful. Especially Seminar Two, despite it not being in Nigeria, was successful. But, even in Nigeria, the 16 participants who preached and who filled in the questionnaires indicated they benefitted from the training.

### **Learnings from This Project**

The results of this project in Nigeria, particularly the three prosperity gospel sermons preached at the end of the week, indicate that you can teach preaching in a week and people can learn a lot and obtain tools to incorporate in the future, but it is more difficult to change someone's theological outlook so quickly. The first chapter was based on the true supposition that a lack of exegetical training for preachers had caused the theological error that has caused so many problems in the church of Nigeria. But what we ended up testing was if exegetical training could reduce the theological error. The results indicate that it is possible to teach the tools for preparing expository messages, but there remains some question as to whether one week of training will result in a preacher reframing their theological outlook. Theology goes deeper than training, it is more like culture in that way. I have heard stories of people who turn away from the prosperity gospel, but based on my observations and data, especially since the prosperity gospel in particular is also cultural, it will take time and perhaps a new community for fellowship to help them reframe their thinking. However, the power of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God are the best tools to combat it.<sup>10</sup>

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10. See for example: Costi W. Hinn, *God, Greed, and the (Prosperity) Gospel: How Truth Overwhelms a Life Built on Lies* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2019).

## Possible Solutions: A Longer-Term Format Could Bring More Lasting Change

Perhaps teaching the Thoughtful Proclaimer method in a more extended format would allow for deeper transformation of the preacher. It was very clear to me from many of the sermons in Nigeria, that it is very difficult to read and study a text in context and preach only on that passage without giving it a gloss from your other religious perspectives, which for some was the prosperity preaching.

The Thoughtful Proclaimer method, especially since there is a manual, could be taught in a 15-week semester or extended course format where the pieces of the process could be digested, and other styles of preaching or teaching could be practiced and community could be formed around biblical theology.<sup>11</sup> This could be done partially online. Because this course is meant to be a “thoughtful” inductive process, an online course with fewer time constraints might allow for better absorption of the material and time to rethink theological positions.

I do have misgivings about people working alone online and how that translates to actual real-life ministry. I do not think online alone will be as effective as working collaboratively and going through the experience of preaching a sermon in front of a class of people who are working through the same materials. This type of in-person practice has real benefits for practical formational learning for ministry. Online learning would be best mixed with some in-person and video internet interaction, to give some practical experience. It was

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11. I have a 15 week course outlined which allows time also for how to use the inductive study to prepare a Bible study type lesson, not just a sermon.

my observation that the success of Seminar Two was related to the time spent together in discussion at meals and working together in the evenings.

For these reasons, an extended structure might be formatted as a 15-week online course with virtual discussions, and each participant delivering an in-person Bible teaching at week seven, and an in-person sermon at the end of week 15. This would allow for the in-person discussions, practical application, and longer study to allow the message to sink in. Because I believe the key to expository preaching and the growth of expository preachers is consistent use of sequential exegesis through books in a canonical context the added time could allow for more emphasis on this. In this way a person's theology could develop and becomes the core of the preacher, not just an academic exercise.

Additionally, in Nigeria and elsewhere in Africa, one pastor who is well trained and experienced could teach many others in their home church through the use of my book, if they really understood the method, and perhaps if there were video trainings as adjunct. In this way, the positive influence of the Thoughtful Proclaimer method, especially in conjunction with other Bible study training, could be multiplied. I would suggest the training be done as a weekly study which would include discipleship and leadership building.

#### Possible Solutions: Thoughtful Proclaimer Method in Conjunction with Biblical Training

In conjunction with the belief that you can train a person how to preach in a week, but you cannot change a person's theology overnight, the survey results indicate that the participants in Nigeria believed they understood the Commander's Intent, and that it was found

in both the author's intent for the book and God's intent in the Canon. But from their sermons, I am not sure everyone was able to fully incorporate that truth due to a lack of biblical background. Those who did preach biblically, in Nigeria, were generally also actively involved in biblical training using inductive Bible study methods at Hebron Home or had attended another training school or seminary.

Clearly the addition of Bible training makes a big difference to preaching. Any teaching of preaching that is done outside of the context of biblical knowledge will have less of the desired effect. One of the purposes of the method is to grow people's biblical and spiritual knowledge as they read passages in book-length context and study them sequentially, consequentially each preacher would increase their biblical knowledge. Still, starting from a place of very little understanding of the Bible and with an unbiblical theological background, a preacher will have difficulty preaching a biblical sermon. The United States seminars were probably more successful because the participants had either theological training or had years of exposure to Bible study or expository preaching.

Teaching preachers and biblically literate persons how to prepare an expository sermon in one week is achievable. But training those who are not familiar with the Bible, are not willing to read full books, or are steeped in the prosperity gospel will take a three-pronged approach of biblical training, theological study, and training in preaching. So, in conjunction with Hebron Home, or other ministries or schools, the Thoughtful Proclaimer method can successfully teach preachers to prepare biblical expository sermons based on God's intent as demonstrated in a particular author's inspire writing.

## What I Learned from Writing the Thesis Regarding the Significance of the Atonement

In addition to learning that the method may benefit from being taught over a longer time span and that a biblical background or concurrent Bible teaching and theology should accompany the method, I learned that in the future, at the very least, I will need to spend time teaching the basics of the gospel and the meaning of the atonement (See Chapter Four) in settings where that is not understood. In upcoming seminars in Africa, I plan to add teaching on the atonement to the current material. This is necessary because of the prevalence of the prosperity gospel. Now that I have studied the teaching of the prosperity gospel, I realize that it is based on a deficient understanding of the atonement and the resulting eschatological timeline that has led many down the wrong path. They are unaware that no amount of faith can completely undo all of the effects of the Fall while here on earth. If I am teaching in Nigeria or other places in the Majority Christian World I must realize that many have not been taught that their salvation is due to Jesus Christ's sacrificial death on the cross. In fact, they do not understand their own guilt before God and the ramifications of that.

Because of this missing element of true Christianity, they cannot understand teachings such as application motivated by a grateful response to Christ's sacrifice on our behalf.<sup>12</sup> I will need to adjust the order of materials when I teach in Africa to clarify the concepts of redemption and the atonement, what they accomplish, and when those things will be fully realized.<sup>13</sup> I understand now that my teaching on day four of the stories in Luke 15 and the two

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12. Keller, "Preaching to the Heart,"

13. The fact that I had been able to teach through the book of Romans and the book of Philippians with many of the participants helped some of them to understand the redemptive preaching and grateful application.

audiences Jesus was speaking to, may not have adequately conveyed my intention of demonstrating Jesus's style of redemptive preaching to both those who are lost and those who are self-righteous or who are hurting. This is because they do not know they are lost and they cannot comprehend that suffering is part of the believer's life.

I will consider adding a comprehensive teaching or sermon which clarifies the meaning of the atonement because there was a direct correlation in the seminars between those preachers who exhibited a better grasp of expository preaching and those who had previously attended my teaching on Romans and Philippians in the prior weeks.<sup>14</sup> Those participants had already spent time discussing and considering the reason for Christ's death, the place of suffering, and the appropriate response to salvation in the life of the believer.

These solutions, expanding the teaching time, encouraging other ongoing biblical training, and making sure the participants have a firm grasp of the gospel and the atonement, will be beneficial.

### **Thoughts on the Future of Christianity in Nigeria**

The primary "take-away" I have from my experience in Nigeria is that biblical preaching matters and it is worth fighting for. Some believers have seen the prosperity gospel and found it unable to fix their problems and have fallen away. Yet, the prosperity gospel is big business: flashy conferences, television broadcasts, the internet, and the siren call of fame. But in the

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14. My definition of expository preaching is an ambassadorial proclamation of God's reconciling intent for the world portrayed in the original inspired author's intent as observed in a passage's rhetorical, historical, and canonical setting.

end, some get rich, some miracles occur, but most Christians in Nigeria continue searching for yet deeper truth, more miracles, and power over difficulties which they do not know how to find, often moving from one church to the next in search of it.<sup>15</sup> They seem unaware that the answer is at their fingertips in the inspired Word of God. Conrad Mbewe tells us, “Sadly, very few church pastors today are preaching the gospel to nonbelievers and believers. If you were to pull an average Christian [in Africa] aside today and ask him or her to tell you what the gospel is, you would be shocked at the level of ignorance.”<sup>16</sup> For this reason, expository preaching on the dual a(A)uthorial intent (the Commander’s Intent) needs to be taught everywhere so that *euangelion* and *kerygma* are both part of the preaching.

As I pointed out in Chapter One, I and other evangelical ministry leaders are convinced that prosperity gospel mixed with African traditional religions cannot grow true Christianity in Nigeria as it blends the three and ends up losing the central truth that salvation is by faith in Christ and his substitutionary death for our sins.<sup>17</sup> By misunderstanding salvation by faith, believers think that faith is not about a relationship with Jesus but a tool to get what you want. By missing the substitution of Christ’s life for ours, believers cannot understand that we live godly lives, not because we have to, but because we want to.

Preachers in Nigeria are also often seeking more powerful anointing of the Holy Spirit. In so doing, they are both missing the indwelling Spirit who wants to control them now and not

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15. Mbewe, *God's Design for the Church*, Location 3174.

16. Mbewe, *God's Design for the Church*, Location 968.

17. Maxey, *The Seduction of the Nigerian Church*, Location 1859. Mbewe, “Nigerian Religious Junk.”

filling themselves with the Word of God, where they would learn that all believers are anointed by the Holy Spirit. It is the gifts of the Spirit and the study of the Word that they most need.

I am convinced that only a counter-revolution of expository preaching based on the authorial intents of the Bible read in context and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit can correct the problems the Nigerian church is experiencing. Thus, teaching preachers to read the Bible for intent is of utmost importance in Nigeria. We will know we have succeeded when pastors model and also teach their own parishioners how to read the Bible for intent in their Bible studies and their homes. The battle for the truth of the Bible over the power of positive thinking is on. The Thoughtful Proclaimer is a step in this direction.

## APPENDIX A

### THOUGHTFUL PROCLAIMER ASSIGNMENT WORKSHEETS—ALL SEMINARS

#### Thoughtful Proclaimer Worksheet 1: First Evening Assignment

Passage \_\_\_\_\_

#### Personal Preparation Questions

- Spend time adoring God for who he is.
- Spend time thanking God for what he has done.
- Spend time in confession:
- What do I need to confess to God today? What have I done wrong? What have I left undone that God has called me to do? (Matt 6:9-15)
- Are there people I need to forgive before I study my passage? (Mark 11:25)
- Do I have any logs in my eye that I need to remove so I can see clearly before pointing out the specks in others' eyes? (Matt 7:3-5)
- Are there areas where I am being a "hearer only" and not a doer of the Word? (James 1:22-25)
- Ask God to open your heart and eyes to hear from him as you study your passage.

#### Listen! Listen

- For the first reading or two, just let the Bible speak and respectfully and humbly listen. Don't write anything down.
- Read the surrounding chapters. Do these passages change the message of the passage in any way?
- Read the passage in many translations and note translational differences.
- As you read, jot down the questions you have and the questions your readers will have.

### **Personal Questions Regarding the Passages Might Include:**

- What stands out to me about this passage?
- Why would God put this passage in the Bible?
- What is this passage about?
- What questions do I have for God after reading this passage?
- What don't I understand here?
- What parts of this passage or its message don't I like?
- What about this passage goes in a direction opposite from the way most people suppose it should go? What is God saying here that is countercultural?
- What is God saying to me personally in this passage?
- Where do I need transformation to live out what God is telling me in this passage?
- What work does the Holy Spirit need to do in my life because of what I've read here?
- What is God telling me to change before I am honestly able to preach this passage to others?
- Why did the Holy Spirit inspire this passage?
- What is the Holy Spirit's message from this passage?
- What are the "bright, shiny memory verses" in this passage?

### **Personally Practice Lectio Divina—Meditate on the Passage:**

#### *Lectio*

Carefully examine and collect the grapes with care. Examine the passage closely. Pay attention to the words and thoughts and how the thoughts are connected. Note their connections and patterns noted. Write down what you see.

#### *Meditatio*

Squeeze the juice from the grapes. Meditate on the passage. Look for the meaning hidden in plain sight in the passage. What are some of the things this passage is saying to you?

#### *Oratio*

Ferment the juice, talk to God, pray. Ponder in your heart what God's desire for you is from this passage as you go about your day. Pray that God would align your will with his regarding what he is showing you from this passage. What is God's desire for you personally from this passage?

#### *Contemplatio*

Taste the goodness of God in this message for you. Claim the message. Write down the message of this passage.

## *Operatio*

Spend some time in prayer. Apply the message to your life. Begin to live out this passage. Note your experience living out the passage.

### **Make General Observations about the Passage:**

- Can I imagine the original author writing or preaching of this passage? What was that like?
- Do we know who wrote this book? What do we know about him? (See Study Bible Introduction to your book)
- What can we tell about the human author from the Bible book itself if he is not identified?
- Is the audience this was written to different from the characters in the story?
- Is this book focused on the past, present, or future?
- Did this book cause anything to change or happen when it was written?
- Who are the characters in this story or passage? What are they like? How are they like or different from us?
- What are the characters doing or what does the writer of the book want me to do?
- Where is God in this passage? What is he doing?
- Is this passage written to or for an occasion or circumstance or to address a particular problem? What is it?
- How is this circumstance, occasion, or problem similar to or different from today?
- What do I need to know more about to understand this passage?
- Which questions can I answer from the text and its surrounding context?
- Which questions can't I find the answers to in the book I'm studying? (Make a note of them.)
- What would I want to ask the author of this passage if he were here with me?
- What appear to be the key verses that convey the main meaning in this passage? (Note: the key verses are not necessarily the bright, shiny memory verses.)
- What is the Bible saying here in one paragraph or less?

## Thoughtful Proclaimer Worksheet 2: Second Evening Assignment

Passage \_\_\_\_\_

Context, Context, Context

Here are some questions to get you started. Answer those that are relevant and ignore the rest. Add your own questions of the text.

### Book of the Bible: Questions to Think About:

- Who was this book written to? Who was its audience? What was their situation?
- What appears to be the book's purpose?
- What do you learn about the purpose of this book from the first and last chapters?
- Why was this book written?
- What was its purpose according to commentaries?
- What do I see as the theme of the book that contains my passage?
- Were the people this book is about or the people it was written to religious? Were they worshippers of YHWH, of Jesus, or of idols?
- If the book is prophetic, what were the circumstances facing the people?
- How were the people this book was written to different from us?
- How does the purpose of this book relate to us?
- What might the purpose of this book be for us today?

### Surrounding Passages: Questions to Think About:

- What do the surrounding passages have to do with the one I am working on?
- If this passage is a story, parable, psalm, or proverb, what other stories, poems, or sayings in the same book relate to it?
- How does the main idea of this passage fit into the larger context of the book it is in?
- What does this passage mean to say in light of the larger context and the book it is in?
- Are there repeated words or ideas that help me find the beginning and end to the story?
- If this is a story or poem, do other connected stories or poems have the same theme or teaching?
- What is the climax of the story or poem?
- What is the conclusion of the story or poem?

- What seems to be the purpose of the story or poem?

### **Canonical Context: Questions to Think About:**

- How does this passage fit into the story of God and of salvation?
- How does this passage relate to the surrounding books of the Bible?
- Why do you think this book included in the canon?
- What is different about the message of this book than the message of all the other books in the Bible?
- What are the parallel passages in both Testaments? What can I glean from them?
- If this book is one of the prophets, what other books expand on the situation, and what do they say?
- What important cross-references that relate to the main theme of this passage can I find in a concordance?

### **Literary Genre: Questions to Think About:**

- What is the genre of this passage?
- What difference does the genre of this book make to its meaning?
- What literary forms are in the larger genre of this passage?
- Why did God inspire this message to be written in this genre?
- How might the literary form change the way I choose to proclaim this message?

### **Historical Background: Questions to Think About (Make Notes as Needed):**

- When was this book written?
- Why were these people being written to or about?
- What was the prevailing historical situation at the time? (Was there war, famine, plenty, etc.?)
- What is happening in the history of Israel, the church, or the world at the time this was written?
- What was the geopolitical situation at the time of this book?
- What are the people feeling and experiencing?
- How is the meaning of the passage tied to its historical context?
- What is clearly different about then and now? What is the same?
- What sorts of interpretation may be needed to apply this text to our context?

### **Cultural Background: Questions to Think About:**

- What were the invisible presuppositions that made up their culture that are very different from the invisible presuppositions that make up ours?
- What difference do these presuppositions make to God's intent and purpose for the passage?
- How are the people this book was written to like us?
- How are they different from us?
- If this takes place in or describes a geographic location, where is it? What does it look like? What does it feel like? How would that affect their culture?
- Did the people this passage was originally delivered to live in a rural or relatively urban setting? How does that affect the meaning?
- Were they settled or nomadic people?
- Were they living in the pre-temple times, or was there temple worship?
- Were they pre-exilic, in exile, or post-exilic? (The Babylonian exile in 586-538 B.C. is a major division in Old Testament. The book of Ezra marks the division between pre-exilic and either prophecy or post-exilic literature.)
- Were the people this is written to or the characters in the story slavery or free?
- Were they Jewish or Christian or both?
- Were they persecuted or not?
- What were their marriage practices?
- In what types of houses did they live?
- How did they raise their families?
- What is the basic social structure in this book—extended family, limited family, nation?
- Can we discern any of their invisible cultural beliefs from the book?
- Did they worship YHWH or someone or something else? Why?
- What biblical background information on the culture is relevant to this passage?
- How do these observations affect our understanding of this passage?
- How do these observations affect the application of this passage?

### **Redemptive Theological Questions for Thought:**

- What passages from the Old Testament further inform me about this passage? What do they say?
- What passages from the New Testament further inform me about this passage? What do they say?
- What does this passage say about God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit?
- What does this text say about God's love?
- What group or person represents God in this text?
- What does this passage reveal about human brokenness?

- How does this passage point to sin or how we have fallen short of God's purposes for our lives?
- What does this passage say about God's work?
- What does this passage say about God's message to the world?
- What does this text say about God's will for humankind?
- What is God (in each one of the three persons of the Trinity) doing in this biblical text?
- What divine judgment rests on those in this text and why?
- Why did God choose to act in this text?
- What hope does this text imply or offer?
- What does this text say about how God will restore humanity to his purposes?
- What does God do behind the scenes in the larger story of the Bible to accomplish his will regarding the problem in this passage?
- What is said or implied about the future and God's promises?
- How does the idea of covenant play into this passage?
- Are there messianic overtones or types in this passage?
- Does the passage point to blood, forgiveness, or sacrifice?
- Where is grace displayed in this passage?
- What characters might point in some way to Christ?
- What characters point to the need for Christ?
- Where is Christ or forgiveness portrayed?
- Where might Christ be needed?
- Is there a story of redemption here either secular or spiritual?
- How does any story of redemption in this passage relate to Christ?
- How does this passage relate to Jesus Christ's earthly ministry?
- What message from God is this passage relaying?
- Where is the Holy Spirit in this passage? (Is he behind the scenes, or empowering characters, or inspiring the author?)
- How can the Holy Spirit empower us to do the thing called for in this passage?
- In what way does this passage speak to the person who may be running from God?
- In what way does this speak to the person seeking God?
- How does this passage speak to those who are sick, suffering, or unable to help themselves?
- In what way does this speak to the religious/legalistic person?
- How does this speak to the self-righteous person (vs. righteousness from God)?
- What does God do in this text to provide or accomplish what is needed?
- What is God doing in the larger context, canon, or salvation story to accomplish what is needed?
- What theological truth does this passage convey?
- What does this passage say, imply, or point to about Christ?
- How does this text connect to the cross, resurrection, or eternity?
- How does our gratefulness to Christ for his offer of salvation cause us to want to live out this text?

- What passage from the other Testament might you pair with your passage to deepen your message or sermon?

## Dig Deep: Ideas

**Divide the passage into major chunks by idea or plot movement either in your Bible or on a separate sheet. Outline the passage.**

If there is a story, write out the plot.

If there is a poem, write out the major thoughts.

If there is a prophecy, look at the near and far situations addressed and find the major themes.

1. How are the major themes or ideas organized?
2. Write an outline the passage or draw its plot noting the rising action, climax of the story or passage, and the conclusion.
3. Underline key words, ideas, and connecting words in the passage.

### **Write a Passage Outline**

Turn your passage outline or plot into a truth idea outline by stating the major headings, “meanings,” biblical truths, or ideas. Write it out. For some passages, this can be a sermon outline it but doesn’t have to be. For many passages you will need to prepare an outline based on further steps.

## Questions for Digging Deeper

This section is meant to help you learn how to ask good exegetical questions of the text. Not every question is important or relevant. Pay attention to the questions that seem relevant to the meaning and ultimate purpose of your text.

### **Dig Deep—General Observations:**

- Note or underline verses or phrases that appear to be key?
- Diagram one key verse or verses if it will help make it clearer.
- What is the mood of this passage? Why was it written in this mood?
- What is the organizing principle of the passage? Is it inductive, deductive, informally arranged, or arranged with the main thought in the middle?
- Why did the writer organize his thoughts in this way?
- What ideas are repeated and why?

### **Dig Deep (Find Your Genre Below and Consider the Questions for That Genre)**

*If the passage is didactic (instructional):*

- After you have outlined the passage in detail, outline the passage with subject headlines-what were the authors main subjects for each paragraph?
- How does the discussion or argument develop?
- Is there any advice? Are there admonitions? Warnings? Promises?
- What are the emphatic phrases?
- Is there figurative language or metaphor in this passage? Why was it used?
- If this is an epistle, what was the situation(s) that are being addressed? Why?
- How are these situations the same or different from our situations today?
- Is the application exactly the same or different today?
- Why did the author organize his ideas as he did?
- What was the most important idea to the author? Where did he put it?

*If the passage is narrative or story:*

- Where does this story or episode begin and end (different places, characters, moods, or change in theme or key words may help us know the end of a story)?
- What is the setting of the story? When does this story occur? Where does it occur? What is significant about these observations as far as the bigger picture of Scripture, Israel, or the church is concerned?
- What is the mood of the story?

- Who is the hero or principal character?
- Who is the antagonist the one who contends with or opposes the main character?
- Is God a protagonist (hero) or antagonist (adversary) in this story?
- What is the significance of the major character's name?
- What is the conflict or problem that comes between the protagonist and the antagonist?
- Does the Bible tell us anything about what the character looked like? Why?
- What is the rising action? What major events lead to the turning point or climax of the story?
- What is the turning point or main even between the protagonist and antagonist?
- What happens after that, the falling action, the events that lead to a resolution?
- What is the resolution or the conclusion of the story or the episode in a long story?
- Who has the power in this story? Who is powerless? Who is excluded from power? How does this affect the meaning?
- How does the story/episode resolve or conclude?
- What is the outcome?
- What ideas are highlighted?
- What brought suspense?
- What words are repeated more frequently than usual?
- Where is God in this story? What is He doing? Is He in front of the camera or behind it?
- What is the theme of the story?
- What is the lesson the main character learned?
- What could we learn from this story?
- Whom do we want to identify with? Whom do we not want to identify with?
- What message is the author trying to get across?
- What other passages of Scripture link to this story or explain it?

*If the passage is a psalm or poetry:*

- What types of images or figurative language is used? What do they represent?
- Take note of the parallelism (similar lines repeated)—how does it function (repetition, enhancements)?
- Where in the Psalter (if this is a psalm) is it? What are the other psalms around it about?
- Note the literary form—how is it arranged? Try to guess why it is arranged that way. Does it start with a call to worship or praise phrase? Is it arranged alphabetically in Hebrew? (e.g., Ps 119).
- Why is this message in this genre (written as poetry instead of as a story or teaching)?
- Divide the passage into strophes or chunks.
- Outline the strophes (like the verses in a musical song) by topic or image.
- Where is the main topic or intent of the passage mentioned? Is it in the beginning, the end, or the middle?
- How are the strophes arranged? Look at the macro arrangement and the micro arrangement of the strophes.

- Is this psalm a community psalm or an individual psalm? What difference does that make to its meaning?
- What is the mood? Is it one more of praise or lament?
- If praise, is it a song of thanksgiving or a hymn of praise?
- If a hymn of praise, is it to the Creator or Redeemer of Israel, or the world, or the ruler of history?
- Is it a storytelling psalm? A psalm of penitence? A psalm of trust and meditation? A royal psalm? A renewal liturgy? A psalm of ascent, a song of Zion, or an enthronement psalm? (You may need to use a study Bible to know the Psalm's history.)
- Note the feelings expressed. Get into the writer's emotions. How was he feeling in each part? Does it change in the psalm?
- Are some of the feelings or phrases troubling to you? Prayerfully note these and then read carefully to see if they are giving emotions to God or are registering trust in His sovereignty.
- Note stories or experiences shared by the psalmist.
- Note key words. How many different words are used for the same basic idea? (For example, Psalm 119 has many words for God's Word.)
- Are there theologically loaded power words (like *love* or *justice*) the psalmist uses?
- What is God's name here (God/Elohim—general word for God or LORD/YHWH—personal name for God)?
- How is God portrayed?
- Note strong illusions or illustrations.
- Can the historical context be discovered? Look up historical or grammatical notes to understand the poetry better.
- Are there any parts that could come from other Near East cultures—mythical references such as water or other gods, etc.?
- Do some parts reflect a simple view of the universe as though chariots pulled the sun across the sky?
- Look up the cross-references or notes to other Scriptures. Note that often, other passages will refer to psalms.
- Read the psalms with a Christian perspective. Look for Christ, prophecy, or covenant.

*If the passage is prophecy:*

- How was this prophecy originally offered—preached, spoken, illustrated, written?
- Is there figurative (metaphor or allegory) language?
- Can you identify what the figurative motifs are meant to point to?
- Who are the characters?
- What subgenres are included? Why?
- Why did God give this message to the prophet?
- What form is this prophecy presented in?
- Is it addressed to a priest, a king, or a group of people? What significance does that have?

- If addressed to a group, is it a nation, an international group, or the kingdom of God?
- How was the prophecy fulfilled in its day?
- Does this prophecy also point to a future fulfillment (for example, a return to the land or a messiah)?
- Does this prophecy point even further to the future (for example, the Day of the Lord)?

### Dig Deep: Words

1. What word or words need to be studied because they carry a lot of weight in the passage, are used repeatedly, or have theological significance? Check the words you underlined in your outline. Look for important words you feel may require deeper study. Note any of the following?
  - key words or important words
  - difficult words
  - repeated words
  - unusual words
  - words with similar meanings repeated
  - words that all start with the same letter (in Hebrew) or that sound the same in Hebrew or words that are pronounced similarly (in the original language) (obviously, commentaries may be helpful here)
  - words that have theological import
  - words influencing the meaning of the text
2. Compare the words you identified above to see how they are translated in several good translations.
3. Study the original word's meaning of one or two of the most important words.
  - a) See which meaning fits in the passage at hand.
  - b) See how that word is used in other places in Scripture (particularly in the book you are studying and other books by that same author).
  - c) What words in Hebrew (if your word is Greek) or in Greek (if your word is Hebrew) have similar meanings?
  - d) Look up your word in a lexicon or the Theological Wordbook of the OT (TWOT) or the Theological Dictionary of the NT (TDNT) if you have access to one. See chapter 8 of *Thoughtful Proclaimer* textbook for more details and help on this. You can use the "Blue Letter Bible" online if you do not have access to the lexicons above. See if the NETBible.org has any notes regarding this word.
  - e) What significance did your word studies have in discovering the meaning of the text?

### Write a Paraphrase of Your Passage

Write a personal paraphrase on a separate sheet using everything you have learned above. If your passage is very long, paraphrase a key section or group of verses.

### Consider the Possible Commander's Intent for the Passage

Consider the Commander's Intent for the passage. Why was this passage included in the Bible? What is its purpose?

### Thoughtful Proclaimer Worksheet 3: Third Evening Assignment

Passage: \_\_\_\_\_

Write out the Commanders Intent for your passage here:

Live: A Transformative Hermeneutic

#### Consider Your Audience

- Identify with the skeptics and doubters. Ask their most challenging questions for them.
- Go over an imaginary list of listeners—those in your audience and those you wish were. How will they hear this passage? What are their needs, and how does the passage apply?
- If there are difficulties for you in believing or accepting what your passage tells you, consider taking a leap of faith to better apply the passage.

#### Questions to Consider for Understanding Our Culture and Our Listeners

- What kinds of people make up my congregation?
- How does my congregation differ from me in their thinking and understanding of Scripture?
- What has been happening in the world lately that this passage reminds me of?
- What things will my audience have difficulty understanding?
- What things in this passage will my audience disagree with?
- Where does this passage differ from popular theological ideas my congregation or society holds?
- Who is going to stop listening to me and tune me out?
- Why should they listen to me?
- Why should they hear this?
- How will I gain their attention or interest?
- What do they need? Do they know they need it?
- How can I make their need for this message clear to them?
- Why is this idea better than the others in other religions or in secular society?

- Could my message sound judgmental, hypocritical, politically incorrect, or mean spirited? How can I address that?
- Would a parable-like story or some other image of the application make the message palatable for my hearers?
- Do I need to translate some ideas or common Christian or biblical words and phrases into a language that laypeople will understand?
- What invisible cultural belief or norm is touched on in our passage?
- What unknown assumptions underlie the way this passage will be understood or make it difficult to accept?
- How can I address those underlying assumptions?
- Where are the hurts in our culture?
- What assumptions in the culture just aren't working? How does Christianity speak to them?
- How does Jesus Christ, salvation, or the application of our passage run counter to culture?
- What about this passage points to a need for personal change?
- What are the biggest issues facing our culture today?
- What do people consider the biggest justice issues?
- How does this passage support and affirm those issues?
- How are the people this passage is written to at cross-purposes with the Commander's Intent for this passage?
- How does this passage help us see the cultural issues of today in a new light?
- How can living out the purposes of this passage help us live better lives?
- How does this passage cure the social ills of today?

**Rethink the Commander's Intent for the passage as it pertains to your audience. Write it below:**

1. Take time to meditate on the Commander's Intent.
2. Let the Commander's Intent permeate your life.

**Think about the Commander's Intent:**

- Do all the verses/paragraphs/strophes in my passage support my Commander's Intent?
- How does the rest of Scripture support my Commander's Intent?
- Does my Commander's Intent contradict any other Scripture? If it does, how can I rectify this?
- How does my Commander's Intent support or reject the cultural ideas of people today where I live?

## Take Time to Percolate

Take time to percolate and get good and strong regarding your message.

Don't forget to rest. Have fun. Have you had a day of Sabbath this week?

Keep meditating on the passage and Commander's Intent as you go about your day.

Plan ways to live out the Commander's Intent.

### Questions to Think about While You Perk:

- What has God been saying to me personally this week from this passage?
- What specific applications can I imagine for me and my people regarding the Commander's Intent of this passage?
- How is living out the Commander's Intent working for me?
- What am I wrestling with God about concerning living out his message?
- What difficulties have I had or will I have living out the Commander's Intent for my passage?
- What has been or will be the hardest part of living out the Commander's Intent?
- Have I experienced any place where the Commander's Intent needed altering after I've thought about it a bit?
- As I begin to live this out, can I think of some universal or specific application?
- What illustrations of the Commander's Intent have I seen in the news or in things I've read or watched?
- Where have I seen the application of the Commander's Intent in action recently?
- What are people talking about or what happened in the news recently that needs to be part of my message? Any holidays?

### Creative Meditation Exercises

- Visualize what is happening in the passage.
- If the passage is a sermon, how did it sound when it was spoken or read aloud to its early audiences? Read it aloud in the translation of your choice like you are preaching it.
- If the passage contains a story, visualize the setting, think of the beginning, the climax of the story, and the end. Make a movie of it in your mind.
- Why was your passage written the way it was?
- If the passage is narrative, tell the story in your own words. Consider telling the story as if it were happening today. Think about the weather, the smells, the sounds.

- If the passage is theological instruction or a letter, explain it in your own words as you would to a friend who doesn't know the Bible. Better yet, go out to lunch with a friend and tell him or her what you think you will say. What is the reaction? What questions does he or she have? What doesn't he or she agree with?
- If the passage is an argument or part of an argument or a sermon, map out where this particular point in the argument or sermon is in the greater argument being made. Why did the writer craft the message this way?
- If the passage is Hebrew poetry, attempt to visualize the concrete images the author has written. How would you describe this in words or pictures for someone else?
- Write down verses that stand out to you personally. Meditate on them for a while or memorize them.
- Think deeply about phrases or words that remind you of other Bible passages and Bible stories, creation, nature, events in your life or that of others dear to you, and any other connections that come to you.
- Prepare to drive home your Commander's Intent with an image; find one simple anchor image that illustrates or reminds people of your main point. This can be a slide if you do slides. Otherwise, plan how to describe some sort of image.
- If you will use images on slides or video clips, begin to gather pictures and videos along with collecting illustrations.

Decide On and Write your Point for Proclamation:

What is the main thing God is saying to your particular audience today from this passage? Write it out as one single sentence.

## Thoughtful Proclaimer Worksheet 4: Fourth Evening Assignment

Passage: \_\_\_\_\_

Commanders Intent for passage:

Write the Point for Proclamation for this sermon:

Love: Compose a Relevant and Redemptive Message

### Redemptive Proclamation Questions to Think About:

- Is there a story of redemption here either secular or spiritual?
- How does any story of redemption in this passage relate to Christ?
- What message from God is this passage relaying?
- How can my listeners apply the point of this passage to their lives?
- How can the Holy Spirit empower us to do the thing called for in this passage?
- In what way does this passage speak to the person who may be running from God?
- In what way does this speak to the spiritually lost person who is seeking God?
- How does this passage speak to those who are sick, suffering, or unable to help themselves?
- In what way does this speak to the religious/legalistic person?
- How does this speak to the self-righteous person (vs. righteousness from God)?
- What does God do in this text to provide or accomplish what is needed?
- What theological truth does this passage convey?
- What does this passage say, imply, or point to about Christ?
- How does this text connect to the cross, resurrection, or eternity?
- How does our gratefulness to Christ for his offer of salvation cause us to want to live out this text?
- What passage from the other Testament might you pair with your passage to deepen your message or sermon?

### **Hermeneutical Questions:**

- Who is my audience, and what are their needs; those they know about and those they aren't aware of?
- Why are they coming to church on this week?
- Why should they listen to me?
- What difference does this message make to them?
- How should they live differently?
- What should my listeners do now that they know what God is saying?
- How can I point to the application without being legalistic, moralistic, or nagging?
- In what way do our culture's assumptions support this passage?
- In what way are my listeners' cultural assumptions different from Scriptures or my own?
- How do the events in this text correlate to events in my community or in the world?
- How can I show the difference between what we are called to do in this text and what God has already done for us?
- How can I make clear that our good deeds and moral actions are not a way to win points with God but are rather done in gratefulness to God? (Remember, Jesus has already made the sacrifice, we now live in grateful response to Him for that.)
- How can I show that no one can do the actions called for in this text without God's help?
- How will I make clear that we have all fallen short of these actions but that we can be forgiven by God's free offer of grace?
- How can I demonstrate the living out of these actions by the Holy Spirit's help?
- How do we answer the question that our listener has about our Point for Proclamation—"So what?"

### **Write out the intended application for your message and make it relevant to those seeking God.**

Be sure to make the intended Point for Proclamation and its application relevant to those seeking God, the mature believers, and the immature believers in your audience.

Re-write out the Point for Proclamation as a sentence that includes everything you think it needs to:

## Prepare Your Message

### Homiletical Questions:

- What is the best way to structure this message to get across the Commander's Point for Proclamation to this audience? (inductive, deductive, mixed, narrative)
- Write out your message outline or structure on a separate piece of paper.
- Start considering what your Point for Proclamation catchphrase be? May it be from a verse, or a parable, or a Psalm, or just a catchy phrase.
- What images, stories, references, or illustrations will I use to support the Commander's Intent Point for Proclamation?
- How will I introduce my message?
- How will I conclude my message?
- How will I make my message stick so the people listening can't forget it?
- How will I allow for a response to God's working through my message?

### Steps to Prepare Your Sermon

1. Define clearly in your mind one Point for Proclamation.
2. Write your messages outline if it is different from the passage outline.
3. Turn your longer Point for Proclamation into the catchphrase you will use throughout your sermon.
4. Find an anchor image that reflects the Point for Proclamation in minds and hearts.
5. Gather your message resources, pictures, illustrations to point to truths, stories, application examples.
6. Write your conclusion.
7. Write your introduction.
8. Write your message if you choose to speak from a written manuscript or write an outline.
9. In what way will you help the listener respond to your message? (a time for meditation, a discussion, an invitation to come for prayer, a song they sing, listening to a song performed, suggestion of application or action)

Write out your short catchphrase here:

## Remove Anything Extraneous from Your Message

### Preflight Checklist

- Does my introduction connect with my audience and make them want to listen in the first minute or so?
- Does my introduction prepare the audience for the message?
- Do I get “on their island” emotionally or culturally at the start of the message?
- Is there an action called for in this passage? Did I include it in my message?
- Did I apply generally and specifically the action called for?
- Is it clear why we would want to do the thing called for?
- What are the ramifications of not doing the thing called for in this message?
- Is God’s message my message?
- Did I point out the need for a grateful response to the suffering of Christ on the cross?
- Did I expect people to help themselves or encourage them to call on the Holy Spirit for help?
- Is there any part of me or my opinions that I state as biblical truth and not clearly as my opinion?
- Do I waste a lot of time talking about things not relevant to my message? What can I cut out?
- Does the Commander’s Point for Proclamation catchphrase lead people away from the meaning of the passage or point to it?
- Does the Commander’s Point for Proclamation truly reflect the most significant point in the passage?
- Is the Commander’s Point for Proclamation a transformational point, not just a point of fact?
- Is the Commander’s Point for Proclamation universally applicable?
- Are all the other points in my outline, all stories, and all illustrations directly in support of the Point for Proclamation?
- Does the conclusion directly support and distill the Point for Proclamation?
- Did I explain the ramifications of not doing what the Bible says in this passage?
- Does my message speak to the younger brother (the prodigal son-the seeker) and the self-righteous older brother? (See Luke 15)
- Is the gospel, redemption, forgiveness, or hope explicitly part of the message?
- Are there any cultural, historical, or other differences between then and now that may affect the truth of my Commander’s Intent Point for Proclamation or how my listeners hear it?
- Do I give credit for all quotes, ideas, and illustrations? Do I have permission to use all the images I have on screen? Have I obtained the proper licenses for the use of my video clips?

## APPENDIX B

### THREE-DAY SEMINAR ONE—SCHEDULE AND SYLLABUS

The purpose of this seminar to prepare lay leaders to teach and preach biblical messages in a variety of settings. The sub-purpose is that this preparation would not only lead to spiritually in-depth and transformational messages but that the proclaimer would learn how to be spiritually fed and personally transformed as they prepare a message.

To this end the seminar will focus on spiritual disciplines, inductive Bible study, sequential Bible passage message series, interpreting passages for the author's (both the earthly and the heavenly author's) primary intent, contextual understanding and application, and well-organized single focused biblical messages. Spiritual disciplines for Bible teachers, inductive biblical interpretation for message preparation, relevant message application, and an overview of speaking styles and methods will be covered. The lectures, exercises, and discussion will culminate in practical results with each participant teaching or preaching once. Participants will be ready to practice the Thoughtful Proclaimer message preparation method on their own upon successful completion of the seminar.

#### **Thoughtful Proclaimer “Bottom-Up” Seminar One Schedule**

Thursday

8:45-AM Registration

#### **Practical Preparation: Message Preparation Begins with Messenger Preparation**

(9-9:45) (Devotional) Seminar and participant introductions, Course overview, Terminology

## **Changed by the Word**

(9:45-10:00) Chapter 1: The Work of the Holy Spirit, God's Word in the Bible, God's Word through Us, Why Questions are Important-Inductive Thinking, Christ Is Proclaimed in All Scripture, the Authority of the Word of God, How Self Gets in the Way, Theology and Deductive Thinking, Fortune Cookie Preaching

## **The Commander's Intent**

(10:00-10:15) Chapter 2: What is the Commander's Intent, Overview of the Thoughtful Proclaimer Message Preparation Method, Expository Preaching and Bible Teaching

(10:15-10:45) Coffee Break -Explore the Salvation Army Eastern Headquarters

## **Inquisitive Bible Study**

(10:45-11:15 AM) Chapter 3: (Start with Questions) (Thoughtful Proclaimer Worksheets Distributed) God's Word Discovered by Us Is Contagious, Learning to Ask Good Questions, Theological Bible Interpretation, Inductive Exegesis-4 Reasons

(11:15-11:45) Dividing Texts, Planning a Biblical Series, Chapter 4: Fingerprints, Why Preaching with a Plan Works Best, Why Preach Whole Books-5 Reasons, How to Carve a Book without Butchering It-by Genre

(11:45-12:00) Passage suggestions, question-and-answer time

(12:00 PM) Lunch in cafeteria

Lunchtime assignment: Choose passage to prepare to preach or teach on from

-Instructor available to discuss passage choices and answer questions during lunch

Optional assignment to be done any time after the seminar: Put together a 30-Week Teaching/Preaching Calendar on the Book of John (or the book of your choice). Label one side with numbers 1-30 and then list the passages to preach or teach on next to them. No need to add message titles. May be emailed to instructor at any time for evaluation.

## **Thinking Exegetically for Accurate Bible Messages**

(1:00-1:30 PM) -Listen-Contemplative Theological Exegesis Chapter 5: (Questions)  
Letting the Bible Speak, Practicing Lectio Divina, Abiding in the Vine, Translations, Take the Bible  
at Face Value, Stewardship of Time  
Thoughtful Proclaimer Method and Worksheet Introduced

(1:30-2:30 PM) Contextual Signposts 1-5, Chapter 6: The Book of the Bible, Surrounding  
Passages, Canon, Cross-References, Primary Passage in Charge, Think Theologically, Genre as  
Key to Meaning and Message Form

(2:30-3:00) Coffee Break

(3:00-4:00) Signposts 5-6 and the Gospel, Chapter 6 continued: History, Culture, the Big  
Story of Redemption and the Gospel, Geography and Biblical Memory, Typology and Messianic  
References, the Overarching Covenants, Power of Prophecy

(4:00-4:30) -Dig Deep: Ideas Chapter 7: Dividing a Passage into Ideas, How Genre Affects  
Structure, Outlining Passages (Chunks or Plot), (NavPress' s "General Principles of  
Interpretation")

(4:30-5:00) Dig Deep: Words Chapter 8: Word Studies (from Greek and Hebrew Words),  
(Choosing words to study, the process, the tools) Semantic Range, Combine Dig Deep Ideas and  
Words to Make a Personal Paraphrase

## **Evening Assignments**

Complete Thoughtful Proclaimer Worksheets on your chosen passage. Stop after the Dig  
Deep Words section on page 15. This will be turned in at the end of the seminar on Saturday or  
emailed to the seminar leader.

Friday

### **Transformative Hermeneutics-Finding and Proclaiming Big Ideas Well**

(9:05-9:45) (start with devotions) Considering the Audience's Cultural Context Chapter 9: Empathizing with Skeptics, Ask Challenging Questions, Identify with Listener's Needs, Find Culture's Sore Spots

(9:45-10:30) Deciding on the Commander's Intent of Your Passage Chapter 10 Passage Structure, Key Verse/Phrase, Repeated Themes/Words

(10:30-11:00) Coffee Break

(11-11:45) Deciding on the Commander's Intent (Continued) Chapter 10 Continued: Haddon Robinson's Big Idea, Theology, Book Purpose, Ladder of Abstraction, Hermeneutical Spiral, Thoughtful Proclaimer

(11:45-12) Take Time to Let the Scripture Percolate Chapter 11 Live out the Commander's Intent

12-12:30 Lunch in cafeteria

(12:30-1:00) Find a quiet place and begin to go through the worksheet from the "Consider Your Audience" Section of the worksheet on page 15 to the Love: Compose a Relevant and Redemptive Message. If you have time, "Let the Commander's Intent Permeate Your Life Section of the Thoughtful Proclaimer Worksheet"

### **Redemptive Purposeful Homiletics**

(1:00-2:00) The Double Foci of Redemptive Proclamation-Spirit-Empowered, Grace-Filled Application Chapter 12: Two Redemptive Foci, Redemption as Motivation for Proclamation, Offer Redemption, Plan for Divine Intervention, Speak Grace Not Rules, Gratefulness as Motivation for Change, Spirit-Empowered Transformation, Messengers of Clay

(2:00-3:00) Transformative Messages with One Point for Proclamation, Catchphrases, and Anchor Images Chapter 13: Always Have One Point, Commander's Intent to Point for Proclamation, the Point for Proclamation Is the Purpose of Your Message, Catchphrases How to Write Catchphrases, Anchor Images

(3:00-3:30) Coffee Break

(3:30-4:30) Message Structures, Chapter 14: Sermon Structures, Slides, Ways to Share Truth, Illustrations, Introductions, Conclusions, Plan for a Response, the Deflated Balloon Feeling, Preflight Checklists

(4:30 -5:00 PM) Presentation, Transitions, Presentation Methods, Dress, Visual Materials

## Saturday

### **Messages**

(9:15-12) Participant Messages (15 minutes each) followed by group discussions (15 minutes each). See discussion rubrics at the end of the syllabus. Please fill in one rubric for each participant including yourself.

(12:00-12:30) Lunch

### **Research Surveys**

(12:30-2 PM) Required Post-Seminar Surveys

## **Seminar One Description**

The Thoughtful Proclaimer method teaches participants how to find and profitably convey the intention of God for his Word to others. This seminar is specifically for those called to be Bible teachers or preachers and for others who seek to proclaim the Bible effectively in their settings. It is intentionally brief but complete so we will move quickly through material.

The seminar is suitable for lay church leaders, Bible study leaders, adult Sunday school teachers, and other church and parachurch leaders who are called to regularly preach or teach. This course focuses on expository Bible teaching and preaching that is redemptive and transformational.

The philosophical underpinning of the Thoughtful Proclaimer seminars is that message preparation is first messenger preparation. To that end there is an emphasis on life transformation and spiritual formation for the proclaimer as well as on listening well to the Scriptures. Both endeavors must be empowered the Holy Spirit.

Participants will be encouraged to proclaim serial messages through books of the Bible. The viewpoint of this instructor is that for those who receive the high calling of teaching and preaching the Word of God there is nothing more important that they can do than to seek diligently to find the intent of God for all Scriptures, both the Old and New Testaments. Those who are called by God should do their utmost to proclaim that intent clearly and effectively while living it out themselves.

## **Participant Goals and Objectives**

The goal of this seminar is for the participants to be able to teach or preach biblically grounded, contextually relevant, redemptive messages that transform both seekers and believers to grow as disciples of Jesus Christ. It is expected that the preparation of such messages will cause the participant to grow in the knowledge of God's Word as he or she personally grows closer to Jesus Christ as they depend on His Spirit to empower their proclamation.

The participant will learn the importance of consistent spiritual growth, dependence on the Holy Spirit, cultural awareness, the value of their own personality and creativity in message preparation. The spiritually transformative effect of the message will be evaluated by group discussion, encouragement, and critique of the message and its effect on the listeners.

The participant will be able to exegete, for the purposes of proclamation, both the Old and New Testament using extensive inductive contextual questions and Scripture meditation in order to interpret a text. They will demonstrate this by turning in their Thoughtful Proclaimer Worksheets for one passage (either the Old Testament or the New Testament) that they choose to teach or preach on.

The participant will be able to divide up a book of the Bible and plan a teaching/preaching series relevant to their intended ministry based upon it. If they so choose

they may prepare a calendar suitable for their future ministry to turn in, for instructor evaluation.

The participant will be able to prepare and present an expository sermon or Bible teaching. He or she will demonstrate this by presenting an original Bible teaching or an original sermon to the other seminar participants.

The participant will learn to consider the modern day cultural issues that a passage of Scripture addresses. They will demonstrate this by considering the biblical cultural issues and how they compare with modern day cultural issues and record these in their worksheet. The participant will prepare to discuss with the other participants in class how culture, both that of the Bible times and our culture, informs how we preach and teach the truth of God's Word.

The participant will understand the importance of having one single primary pervasive biblical point in each message and will demonstrate this by delivering either a Bible teaching or a sermon. Each participant will clearly articulate, in their sermon or teaching, the main point of the passage's author and will convince others or will apply that one main point taken from a significant length Biblical passage. The other seminar participants and the instructor will then be asked to identify that one transformational big idea from the participants teaching or preaching to help the participant discern if they were successful in making the point.

The participant will become acquainted with and able to choose between several message structures to find one that is most effective for their message and will demonstrate this by preparing an outline which they may turn in to the instructor for evaluation at any time during the seminar.

The participant will utilize transformational techniques by memorably incorporating an Anchor Image or illustration and a Catchphrase or verse into their messages so that the audience can remember the big idea or Point for Proclamation. The effectiveness of their Image and Catchphrase will be evaluated during a brief and encouraging discussion following their message.

The participant will learn the value of and use of visual aids or slides and will be encouraged to demonstrate this, if they so choose, in their Bible teaching/preaching. The efficacy of their use of visual aids will be discussed by the seminar participants.

The participant will learn basic presentation and speaking skills necessary to adequately convey a transformational biblical message. The seminar members and instructor will encourage one another and discuss the effectiveness of the participants chosen presentation style (be it brief notes, sticky notes, the Scripture passage itself, an outline, or a full manuscript).

## Instructional Aim and Philosophy

The aim of this seminar is to not only teach participants how to prepare biblical messages but to give them the confidence to do this in their future ministries while giving them the tools to continue to grow spiritually and biblically for long and effective ministries.

For this reason, the instructor will use a learner-centered approach that is meant to engage and encourage both extroverts and introverts. The collegial atmosphere of the seminar is meant to garner confidence for those who are fearful of public speaking. This method is effective in a seminar with people of varying levels of experience.

Teaching will be accomplished by step-by-step lectures and discussion around Bible proclamation from beginning to end. The teaching is meant to be basic and practical. The lectures are keyed to each step of the message preparation process as outlined in the textbook. To that end, not every issue regarding expository Bible teaching will be discussed; however, supplementary reading is noted in this syllabus and in the textbook for those who choose to learn more.

The Supplemental Readings attached to the syllabus incorporate both step by step message preparation, spiritual formation for Bible proclaimers, and speaking skills.

The seminar will be multi-sensory to not only be effective for participants with different learning styles but to model the use of multi-sensory teaching/preaching which speaks to multiple learning styles in our congregations.

An emphasis will be placed on personal spiritual transformation and continuing growth in biblical knowledge. In this way participants will be preparing for long and effective ministries that incorporate the whole canon rather than sending participants out to preach subordinate biblical ideas taken out of their canonical context. By emphasizing the ethos of the proclaimer over presentation prowess we model the importance of the power of the Holy Spirit for transformative messages.

The seminar will be collaborative rather than competitive. The presentation of a final message will be discussed by the seminar and instructor with respect and a positive view. The messages will be evaluated on heart transforming power as well as on exegetical accuracy and oratorical skill. Each participant will be encouraged to critique their own message after watching a recording of it later so that they will be encouraged.

Each participant will have the opportunity to schedule a meeting with the instructor following the seminary to discuss things they felt went well and areas they feel they would like more work on.

## Seminar Prerequisites and Relevance

This course is especially designed for those who are practicing preachers or Bible teachers or who intend to teach or preach in the future as well as for pastors and others who would like to learn how to teach this course to their leadership. This is an entry level seminar and has no prerequisites other than a desire to preach or teach and a sense of call to do so.

The first day teaches Bible study and message preparation techniques that can be used for any type of Bible proclamation. The second day contains an overview of typical message structures and guides for introducing and concluding messages. The seminar will focus primarily on teaching the participants one method, the Thoughtful Proclaimer Method well.

Previous study in the ancient languages of Hebrew or Koine Greek, biblical exegesis, hermeneutics, or theology is not required. This seminar is suitable for participants with a high-school-level English reading ability.

Reading of the primary text prior to or following the seminar will enhance and enforce the learning done during the seminar. For successful completion of the seminar, the text should be read.

## Required and Supplementary Reading and Purposes for Reading

### **Primary Textbook (Required-Paperback copy given to you at seminar)**

Anderson, Elizabeth. *Thoughtful Proclaimer: A Bottom-Up Guide to Preparing Bible Messages That Transform You from the Inside Out*. Bloomington, IN: Westbow Press, 2017.

### **Expository Message Preparation (Supplementary Reading)**

Robinson, Haddon. *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001.

### **Transformational Message Preparation (Supplementary Reading)**

Edwards, J. Kent. *Deep Preaching: Creating Sermons That Go Beyond the Superficial*. Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2009.

### **The Gospel and Cultural Awareness (Supplementary Reading)**

Keller, Timothy. *Preaching: Communicating Faith in an Age of Skepticism*. New York, NY: Viking, 2015.

### **Effective Presentation Skills (Supplementary Reading)**

Reynolds, Garr. *The Naked Presenter: Delivering Powerful Presentations With or Without Slides*. Berkeley, CA: New Riders, 2011.

Decker, Bert. *You've Got to Be Believed to Be Heard: The Complete Book of Speaking—in Business and Life!* New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 2008.

### **Recommended Bibliography for Supplementary Study**

Wilkin, Jen. *Women of the Word: How to Study the Bible with Both Our Hearts and Our Minds*. Wheaton IL: Crossway, 2014.

Wald, Oletta. *The New Joy of Discovery in Bible Study*. Rev. ed. Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2002.

Fee, Gordon, and Douglas Stuart. *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003.

Wilson, Paul Scott. *God Sense: Reading the Bible for Preaching*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2001.

### **Preaching Preparation**

Richard, Ramesh. *Preparing Expository Sermons: A Seven-Step Method for Biblical Preaching*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2001.

Sunukjian, Donald R. *Biblical Preaching: Proclaiming Truth with Clarity and Relevance*. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2007.

Chapell, Bryan. *Christ-Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005.

### **Presentations and Styles**

Galli, Mark, and Craig Brian Larsen. *Preaching that Connects: Using Journalistic Techniques to Add Impact*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994.

Arthurs, Jeffrey. *Preaching with Variety: How to Re-create the Dynamics of Biblical Genres*. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic, 2007.

Randal, Pelton E. *Preaching with Accuracy: Finding Christ-Centered Big Ideas for Biblical Preaching*. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic, 2014.

Lowry, Eugene. *The Homiletical Plot: The Sermon as Narrative Art Form*. Expanded ed. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2001.

## **Recommended Reading for Proclaimers**

Heath, Chip, and Dan Heath. *Made to Stick: Why Some Ideas Survive and Others Die*. New York, NY: Random House, 2008.

Duarte, Nancy. *slide:ology: The Art and Science of Creating Great Presentations*. Sebastopol, CA: O'Reilly Media, 2008.

## **Ancient Biblical Language Help**

Mounce, William D. *Greek for the Rest of Us: Mastering Bible Study without Mastering Biblical Languages*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003.

Fields, Lee M. *Hebrew for the Rest of Us: Using Hebrew Tools without Mastering Biblical Hebrew*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008.

## **Inspiration for Proclaimers**

Robinson, Haddon, and Craig Brian Larsen, eds. *The Art and Craft of Biblical Preaching: A Comprehensive Resource for Today's Communicators*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005.

## **Policies**

Please be on time, alert, and prepared to participate in seminar. Because this is a collaborative seminar, late arrivals, leaving early, and absences disrupt everyone else's learning. No eating of meals or hot food in the seminar room. Snacks and bars okay. Please limit texting and phone use during the seminars as it distracts you and others. Computers should only be used for taking notes. Working on outside work during the sessions is highly discouraged.

Dress Code-Dress for all session is casual. However, since this is a seminar on preaching and teaching your dress should be appropriate to the occasion when you preach or teach. Wear what you would normally wear to speak.

Missed seminar sessions- Attendance is required. Email the instructor if you must be absent from a session with an explanation. Because this is a collaborative seminar, late arrivals, leaving early, and absences disrupt everyone else's learning.

## Passages for Proclamation

Part of this seminar is helping you to learn to choose appropriate and significant passages of Scripture. Choose a passage outside your comfort zone, something in a genre you are not typically used to speaking on. Below are some ideas. Other passages can be used by permission of the instructor for those who are scheduled to preach or teach in the near future and want to work on their passage.

- New Testament Narratives such as
  - John
  - Acts
- New Testament Epistles such as
  - James
  - 1 John
  - Galatians
- Old Testament Narratives that are a challenge
  - Genesis 27
  - 1 Samuel 10
  - 1 Kings 17
  - 1 Kings 21
- Poetic passages from
  - Psalms
  - Isaiah
- Prophecy
- Law

## Message Assessment Rubric: Three-Day Seminar

EVALUATOR:

SPEAKER:

Mark each either WELL DONE / DONE / NOT WELL DONE

- Pericope is well chosen and delineated
- Commander's Intent for passage clear to the speaker
- One Point for Proclamation is made clear to audience
- Audience can remember the main take-home point
- Main Point is applied to life
- Message clearly and appropriately structured (outlined and arranged)
- Good transitions used between parts of message
- Message is contextually appropriate and biblically accurate
  - Canonically grounded
  - Conveys the author's message for the book
  - Fits the surrounding context and includes needed points from it
  - Theologically grounded
  - Christ/gospel tied
  - Placed within redemptive history
- Key words noted and explained as needed
- Message is Interesting/holds attention
- Message is heartfelt/Heart-moving
- Catch Phrase memorable and used
- Anchor Image helpful
- Contemporary culture considered
- Application for "Older Brother"
- Application for "Younger Brother"/skeptic/seeker
- Redemption for life offered
- Redemption for salvation offered
- Holy Spirit-empowered application
- Strong appropriate introduction
- Truth made compelling
- Illustrations powerful
- Slides simple and appropriate if used
- Conclusion clearly fits the Point for Proclamation and application
- Response planned for
- No extraneous material
- Good verbal delivery

## APPENDIX C

### TABULATED RESULTS OF SURVEYS—SEMINAR ONE

**Note:** Each survey answer is in order: Participant 1 // 2 // 3. (Two of the five participants failed to preach or fill in the survey.)

N=3.

#### Demographics

- 1) Have you done any speaking or speeches for adults in the past?

Yes // Yes // Yes

- 2) About how many or how often have you spoken before?

<10 // No Answer // 6

- 3) Which days did you attend the seminar?

All // All // All

- 4) Have you taught/preached/or spoken on the Bible in the past?

Yes, Yes, Yes.

*Women's Bible studies and small groups // Church staff devotional, youth group, children's ministry // NA*

## Questions for Those Who Have Preached or Taught on the Bible in the Past

5) How many times or how often have you done so?

<10 // monthly // 6

6) In the past, how have you usually spoken on a topic or a passage?

*Some of each // Read passage and saw how it spoke to me. Or an idea/thought comes to me and I build on it. // Various ways.*

7) If you chose to speak on a passage in the past, how long of a passage have you spoken on?

*One chapter or less. // Varied but not too large. // 3-4 verses.*

8) If you chose to speak on a passage in the past, how did you choose the passage?

*Sometimes assigned, sometimes inspired by something I heard or read. // I'd be reading my Bible and it would jump out at me. Heard something on the radio or from reading articles. // By topic.*

9) If you spoke on a passage, how did you choose where it began or ended?

*Tried to find logical breaks. // Naturally or where the author's thought began or ended. // Just by what was relevant.*

10) If you spoke on a topic, how did you decide on the theme or topic to speak on?

*Saw a need or was assigned. // Events in my life, journal, from the radio, or inspiration. // Usually something that I was involved in or something I needed to know more about.*

11) How have you planned or written your messages in the past?

*Pray, read Scripture, hope for divine guidance, read commentaries. // Read aloud. No real process. // Just wrote it out.*

12) Did you have a specific protocol or way of doing it?

*No // No // No*

- 13) If you have spoken on the Bible in the past, did you feel any more or less confident that your message was based on the theme or topic of your passage than you did in the past?

*A) No Improvement   B) A Little Bit of Improvement   C) Some Improvement  
D) Moderate Improvement 1 E) A Great Deal of Improvement 2*

- 14) Are you or do you think you will be more or less satisfied with your Bible message since you studied the Thoughtful Proclaimer?

*A) No Improvement   B) A Little Bit of Improvement   C) Some Improvement  
D) Moderate Improvement 1 E) A Great Deal of Improvement 2*

- 15) In what ways did your message preparation change this time from times in the past?

*Faster. More structure to prepare. A before B before C. // Studying the Word first, praying, researching. Rather than "just saying it." // Using the Study Bible. Learning the way to write a message with different elements.*

- 16) Are you more or less satisfied with the accuracy of your Bible interpretation since you studied the Thoughtful Proclaimer?

*A) No Improvement   B) A Little Bit of Improvement 1   C) Some Improvement  
D) Moderate Improvement 2 E) A Great Deal of Improvement*

- 17) About how much did the amount of time did you spend preparing a message in the past? Did the amount of time increase or decrease since you took the Thoughtful Proclaimer Seminar?

*More time in the past and lots of it letting ideas form. // One week. 3-Day course did not allow for that. // Probably spent more time on the Thoughtful Proclaimer method.*

- 18) Do you feel that the Thoughtful Proclaimer method was more spiritually edifying than your previous methods of message preparation?

*A) No Improvement   B) A Little Bit of Improvement   C) Some Improvement  
D) Moderate Improvement   E) A Great Deal of Improvement 2   No Answer 1*

- 19) Do you believe that you are more equipped to find a theme or topic to speak on a particular Bible passage since you studied the Thoughtful Proclaimer method than you were before?

*Yes // Yes, I'm inspired to apply even if for personal use. // Absolutely. More confident that I would do it right and honor God in that.*

*A) No Improvement   B) A Little Bit of Improvement   C) Some Improvement  
D) Moderate Improvement   E) A Great Deal of Improvement **3***

- 20) Did the Thoughtful Proclaimer seminar training increase your level of confidence about your understanding of the passages that you spoke on that you did in the past?

*A) No Improvement   B) A Little Bit of Improvement   C) Some Improvement  
D) Moderate Improvement **1**   E) A Great Deal of Improvement **2***

- 21) Do you feel more confident that your message is biblically accurate since you took the Thoughtful Proclaimer seminar or not?

*A) No Improvement   B) A Little Bit of Improvement   C) Some Improvement **1**  
D) Moderate Improvement   E) A Great Deal of Improvement **2***

- 22) 20) Are you more or less confident that your message will have the intended effect of bringing transformational to the listeners since you took the Thoughtful Proclaimer seminar?

*A) No Improvement   B) A Little Bit of Improvement   C) Some Improvement  
D) Moderate Improvement **1**   E) A Great Deal of Improvement **2***

- 23) In what ways did the Thoughtful Proclaimer method change your method of message preparation?

*Finding the CI [Commander's Intent] first and then the P for P [Point for Proclamation] let those direct the message prep. // Transformed it. Much more disciplined and effective. Something I've been desiring for some time. Now I have the tools. // Had me looking for those anchors and catchphrases etc.*

- 24) In what ways did your message preparation technique not improve, get worse, or become more difficult?

*[No Answer] // More difficult, only because it digs deeper. // [No Answer]*

- 25) In what ways was your message different than messages you have preached or taught in the past?

*Fewer extras with Thoughtful Proclaimer. // Messages came from searching the web, taking other people's words, absorbing them, combining them with my own and others. Seeking out the help of those with more training and tweaking from there. // New elements were incorporated into the talk*

- 26) Did you find the Thoughtful proclaimer technique more spiritually edifying than your previous methods of message preparation?

*A) No Improvement   B) A Little Bit of Improvement   C) Some Improvement  
D) Moderate Improvement 2   E) A Great Deal of Improvement 1*

### **Questions for All Participants**

- 27) What was the most spiritually edifying part of the Thoughtful Proclaimer technique as practiced?

*Reading again and again to identify the CI. // The beginning steps of praying, reading, immersing, studying, and researching the Word. // That you told us we were God's mouthpieces and so we needed to accurate.*

- 28) What was the least spiritually edifying part of the Thoughtful Proclaimer technique as practiced?

*Wondering and worrying about whether to have a Power Point. // Structure // Nothing*

- 29) What things do you agree with in the Thoughtful Proclaimer method?

*Scripture first, God's intent first. // I don't have much to compare to so there is not anything I agree or disagree with. // I really liked all of it and it was a pretty thorough method.*

- 30) What things do you disagree with about the Thoughtful Proclaimer method?

*I used a fairly short passage and think that was okay but not sure. I could have focused with a longer passage. // I am so thankful something is available in a class form to lay people like me who want more but cannot go to seminary. // None*

31) What things were helpful to you about the Thoughtful Proclaimer exegesis method?

*[No Answer] // Inquisitive Bible interpretation. Knowing your audience. // To be able to take a text and find out the true meaning, especially the Commander's Intent. If I took nothing else away this would just be amazing.*

32) What things were not helpful to you about the Thoughtful Proclaimer exegesis method?

*No Answer // No Answer // Nothing*

33) What things were helpful to you about the Thoughtful Proclaimer message writing method?

*Structure first. // The breakdown of the CI, P of P. I honestly never thought of it that way. // I liked the thought provoking questions, although due to time I was not able to fully use them.*

34) What things were not helpful to you about the Thoughtful Proclaimer message writing method?

*Hard to not bring in many other passages. // Not sure and it hasn't all sunk in yet. More time is needed. // I think maybe learning more about structuring a message may be helpful.*

35) Write a short paragraph about how future seminars should be modified.

*[More] Time between sessions. Should be longer when possible. Help for suggested questions-try to list types of questions with a few examples or teach US to come up with the question. // Perhaps having a passage picked out prior to the first day so we could apply while we learn. Maybe spread out over two to three Saturdays // It was a great deal of information and became a bit of overload. And then to go home and put into practice did not give the opportunity to fully digest the material. It was offered to download the book which could have helped to read prior to the seminar but I didn't have time. Maybe doing this over a few weeks, like once a week for 4 weeks.*

36) Write a short paragraph listing the people and groups that you believe need this seminar.

*Teachers to youth and college students, lay teachers, teachers in non-ordaining denominations. // Youth leaders, small group leaders, Young Life leaders, Wild Life leaders, people who voluntarily run youth/Christian groups who do not have the formal education.// It would be helpful for the elders and ministry leaders in our church. I think it's fantastic.*

### Regarding the Seminar Itself

- 37) Did you find the Thoughtful Proclaimer worksheet helpful or a hindrance?

*Overwhelming, made it hard to get from the forest to the trees. // Helpful at first to get the juices going but again did not have time to thoroughly go through it. // Mixed reviews. I have a lot of information if I have time to read it. But given the content, worksheet, and then a message to prepare in one night was a lot.*

- 38) What was your least favorite part of the seminar?

*Having to evaluate my classmates. Might have been easier with a bigger group. // Long days, even staying in the hotel I went straight from class to room to right. // Nothing.*

- 39) What parts of the seminar did you not understand?

*I'd love a list of literature types for each book of the Bible. // I had a hard time determining how to get to the P of P, but fine now. Also, some of the terminology was foreign. // The part about the Big Idea, but hopefully the manual will help with that.*

- 40) What parts of the seminar did you feel you understood well?

*Process for writing. // Preparation and exegesis. // Message structure.*

- 41) What was your favorite part of the seminar?

*Community and camaraderie. You made it feel like we were all on the same team. // Delivering my "sermon message" and creating it. Applying what we learned in class. I hope I remember it all. // The teaching was very good and you're a great teacher, easy to follow and pleasant to listen to.*

- 42) What parts of the seminar would you have preferred to spend more time on?

*Specific resources to use or not to use. // All. Of. It. // Structuring a message.*

- 43) What parts of the seminar would you have preferred to have spent less time on?

*NA // NA // None, perfect.*

- 44) What part of the seminar would you leave out?

*Nothing. More reference to what page we are on in the book. // Short time was hard, lots to cover. // Nothing.*

45) How would you change the seminar?

*More time spent and more in class application with the instructor.  
// Have students come with a passage in time having read it many times./  
// Just the time commitment because it was so much.*

46) Do you feel the seminar was too long?

*No // No // No*

47) Do you feel the seminar was too short?

*Yes // No // No Although I would love to sit and go over how to structure my talk better.  
With the feedback I feel somewhat lost because there is so much feedback.*

**Instructions for Questions 48-72:** Compared to how you felt before or what you knew before taking the seminar, do you feel that you improved or gained knowledge in the following areas (circle the appropriate letter: A, B, C, D, or E) with A) being No Improvement, B) A Little Bit of Improvement, C) Some Improvement, D) Moderate Improvement, E) A Great Deal of Improvement

48) A B C D E--increased appreciation for the need for being changed by the Word before you proclaim it.

E, C, A

49) A B C D E--increased appreciation of the need for repentance in order to understand scripture well.

E, B, A

50) A B C D E--increased understanding the importance of authorial intent.

E, E, E

51) A B C D E--increased appreciation of inquisitive Bible interpretation.

E, C, E

52) A B C D E--increased appreciation of how to choose a significant portion of Scripture to proclaim.

E, E, No Answer

53) A B C D E--increased appreciation for the significance of choosing more significant passages of Scripture.

C, C, E

54) A B C D E--did you gain any helpful skills for how to “listen” better to Scripture?

D, E, C

55) A B C D E--Regarding Scriptures contexts, did you gain in appreciation for the whole book of the Bible as important to the meaning of a small portion?

C, D, B.

56) A B C D E--Regarding the surrounding passages, did you gain an appreciation for studying the surrounding passages in order to find the meaning of the passage you will speak on?

E, D, E

57) A B C D E--Do you understand the need for studying the Commander’s Intent in the rest of the canon before you make a firm decision as to what God has intended?

C, E, E

58) A B C D E--increase in your understanding of the importance of ancient culture.

B, D, E

59) A B C D E--increase in your understanding the importance of canonical context.

C, D, E

60) A B C D E--increase in your understanding the importance of knowing your audience’s culture.

C, C, E

61) A B C D E--increase in your understanding of the importance of literary genre in understanding the meaning or application of a passage?

D, C, E

- 62) A B C D E--more convinced of the need for redemptive messages?  
E, C, E
- 63) A B C D E--increase in ability to study an original language word (Greek, Hebrew, Aramaic).  
E, C, E
- 64) A B C D E--increase in your appreciation of the need for time to allow your exegesis and Commander's Intent to percolate and be lived out.  
E, E, E
- 65) A B C D E--increase in that ability to choose appropriate message structures.  
C, D, No Answer
- 66) A B C D E--increase in the understanding of message structures.  
C, C, E
- 67) A B C D E--increase in choices and ideas for illustrations.  
D, D, E
- 68) A B C D E--increase in the understanding of good ways to introduce a message.  
D, C, E
- 69) A B C D E--increase in the understanding of good ways to conclude a message.  
D, C, E
- 70) A B C D E--increase in the understanding of how to apply a passage without moralizing or asking people to change themselves.  
E, No Answer, E
- 71) A B C D E--increase in the understanding of appropriate Christian motivation for change.  
D, C, E

72) A B C D E--increase in understanding of the need to cut all extraneous material from a message.

E, D, E

73) Do you think that a catchphrase should be incorporated in a Bible message?

A) It is not important B) It is moderately important C) It is very important.

C, B, C

74) Do you think that an anchor image should be incorporated in a Bible message?

A) It is not important B) It is moderately important C) It is very important.

B, B, C

### Message Assessment Rubric: Three-Day Seminar

EVALUATOR:                      SPEAKER: 1 // 2 // 3

-Mark each either WELL DONE / DONE / NOT DONE

Pericope is well chosen and delineated —WD // WD // WD

Commander's Intent for passage clear to the speaker —WD // WD // WD

One Point for Proclamation is made clear to audience —WD // WD // ND

Audience can remember the main take-home point —WD // WD // ND

Main Point is applied to life —D // WD // D

Message clearly and appropriately structured (outlined and arranged) —WD // WD // D

Good transitions used between parts of message —WD // D // WD

Message is contextually appropriate and biblically accurate —WD // WD // WD

--Canonically grounded —WD // WD // WD

--Conveys the author's message for the book —WD // D // WD

--Fits the surrounding context and includes needed points from it —WD // WD // WD

--Theologically grounded —WD // WD // WD

--Christ/gospel tied —WD // WD // WD

--Placed within redemptive history —WD // WD // WD

Key words noted and explained as needed —WD // WD // WD

Message is interesting/holds attention —WD // WD // WD

Message is heartfelt/Heart-moving —D // WD // WD

Catch Phrase memorable and used WD // WD // ND

Anchor Image helpful —WD // WD // WD

Contemporary culture considered —WD // WD // WD

Application for "Older Brother" —WD // WD // ND

Application for "Younger Brother"/skeptic/seeker —WD // WD // ND

Redemption for life offered —WD // WD // ND

Redemption for salvation offered —WD // D // WD  
Holy Spirit empowered application —WD // WD // WD  
Strong appropriate introduction —WD // WD // ND  
Truth made compelling —WD // WD // WD  
Illustrations powerful —WD // WD // WD  
Slides simple and appropriate if used —ND // WD // WD  
Conclusion clearly fits the Point for Proclamation and application —WD // WD // ND  
Response planned for —ND // WD // ND  
No extraneous material —WD // WD // ND  
Good verbal delivery —WD // WD // WD

Results: Speaker 1=93% Speaker 2= 97% Speaker 3=79%

## APPENDIX D

### FIVE-DAY SYLLABUS—SEMINARS TWO AND THREE

The purpose of this class to prepare pastors and preachers to preach biblical expository messages. The secondary purpose it that this preparation not only would lead to spiritually in-depth and transformational messages but also that the students would learn how to be spiritually fed and transformed each time they prepare a message. To this end the class will focus on spiritual disciplines, inductive Bible study, sequential Bible passage message series, interpreting passages for the author's (both the earthly and the heavenly author) primary intent, contextual understanding and application, and well-organized, single-focused biblical messages. Basic Bible exegesis, practical hermeneutics, and an overview of homiletical structures and methods will be covered. The assignments and assigned reading will culminate in practical results with each student preaching once.

#### **Course Description**

The Thoughtful Proclaimer Preaching Seminar teaches students how to find and profitably convey the intention of God for his Word to others in a one-week format. This class is specifically for those called to be preachers and for others who seek to proclaim the Bible effectively in their settings. It is suitable for pastors, missionaries, youth pastors, Bible study leaders, and other church and parachurch leaders who plan to regularly preach or teach. This course focuses on expository Bible teaching and preaching that is redemptive and transformational.

The philosophical underpinning of this class is that message preparation is first messenger preparation, so to that end there is an emphasis on the transformation and spiritual formation of the preacher and on listening well to the Scriptures under the influence of the Holy Spirit. Students will be encouraged to proclaim serial messages through books of the Bible. The viewpoint of this instructor is that the highest calling of the man or woman whose vocation is to preach or teach is that of seeking the intent of God for all Scripture, both the Old and New Testaments, and of proclaiming it clearly and effectively to others and to themselves.

## **Student Goals and Objectives**

The goal of this class is for the student to be able to preach and teach biblically grounded, contextually relevant, redemptive messages that transform both seekers and believers to grow as disciples of Jesus Christ. It is expected that the preparation of such messages will cause the student to grow in the knowledge of God's Word as they personally grow closer to Jesus Christ as they depend on his Spirit to empower their proclamation.

- Students will learn the importance of consistent spiritual growth, dependence on the Holy Spirit, cultural awareness, the value of their own personality, and creativity in message preparation. Students will learn much of this through self-directed contemplative study on the Thoughtful Proclaimer Worksheets each evening. Here they will note their questions and thoughts during sermon preparation. The spiritually transformative effect of the message will be further evaluated by classroom discussion, encouragement, and critique of the message and its effect on the listeners.
- Students will be able to exegete both the Old and New Testament by learning to use extensive inductive contextual questions and meditating on Scripture in order to interpret a text in a way suitable for Bible teachers and preachers and will demonstrate through their classroom discussion and sermon.
- The student will be introduced to the idea of dividing up a book of the Bible and plan a preaching/teaching series relevant to their intended ministry based upon it and will demonstrate this in participation of classroom discussion.
- The student will be able to prepare and present an expository sermon and Bible teaching. He or she will demonstrate this by presenting a short (12 minute) original sermon to the class.
- The student will be able to determine the modern-day cultural issues that a passage of Scripture addresses and will demonstrate this by considering the biblical cultural issues and how they compare with modern-day cultural issues in their specific settings.
- The student will learn the importance of having one primary pervasive biblical point in each message and will demonstrate this in a sermon or Bible teaching. Each of them will clearly articulate, in a short sermon or teaching, the main point of the passage's author and will convince others of that one main point taken from a significant length biblical passage. The instructor will then attempt to determine what that one transformational big idea was by way of sermon assessment.

- Students will become acquainted with and be able to choose between several sermon structures in order to find one that is most effective for their message and will demonstrate this by preparing a message outline that will be turned in with both the classroom teaching and preaching assignment.
- Students will utilize transformational techniques by memorably incorporating an Anchor Image or illustration and a Catchphrase or verse into their messages so that the audience can remember the big idea or Point for Proclamation. The effectiveness will be evaluated by the instructor.
- Students will learn the value of and use of visual aids or slides and will demonstrate this in either their Bible teaching or preaching assignment. The efficacy of their use of visual aids will be discussed by the class.
- The student will learn basic presentation and speaking skills necessary to adequately convey a transformational biblical message. The class members and instructor will critique the effectiveness of the presentation style (be it brief notes, sticky notes, the Scripture passage itself, an outline, or a manuscript).

### **Instructional Aim and Philosophy**

The aim of this class is not only to teach students how to preach and teach but also to give students the confidence to do this in their future ministries while giving them the tools to continue to grow spiritually and biblically for long and effective ministries.

- For this reason the instructor will use a learner-centered approach that gives hope to both extroverts and introverts, along with encouragement to those who are fearful of public speaking. This method is effective in a classroom with people of varying experience and giftedness.
- This teaching will be accomplished by step-by-step lectures that teach Bible proclamation from the bottom up. The required assignments are practical and useful and keyed to each step of the message preparation process.
- The readings incorporate both step-by-step message preparation, spiritual formation for preachers, and speaking skills. The readings are by their nature giving an overview of the process so that the student not only sees one step at a time but also has a sense of the larger process of message preparation and presentation.

- The class will be multi-sensory in order not only to be effective for students with different learning styles but also to model the use of multi-sensory preaching which speaks to multiple learning styles in our congregations. Slides, videos, examples, discussion, and question and answer will be used.
- An emphasis will be placed on personal spiritual transformation and continuing growth in biblical knowledge. In this way we will be preparing students for long and effective ministries that incorporate the whole canon rather than sending students out to preach subordinate biblical ideas taken out of their canonical context. By emphasizing the ethos of the proclaimer over presentation prowess we model the importance of the power of the Holy Spirit for transformative messages.
- The classroom will be collaborative rather than competitive. The teaching or preaching assignment will be discussed by the class and instructor with respect and a positive view. The messages will be evaluated on heart-transforming power as well as on exegetical accuracy and oratorical skill.
- The class will end with the students evaluating the instruction and value of the teaching with multiple-choice and short-answer questions in order to give the students a voice and to improve subsequent courses.

### **Class Prerequisites**

This class is suitable for high-school-level English speakers.

This is an entry-level preaching course. The first half of the course teaches message preparation techniques that can be used for any type of Bible proclamation. The second half of the course contains an overview of many preaching structures and methods. The course concludes by teaching one method, the Thoughtful Proclaimer Method, well.

This course will lay a foundation for more detailed and in-depth study of preaching and communication techniques in a seminary or Bible school. No previous study in the ancient languages of Hebrew or Koine Greek, biblical exegesis, hermeneutics, and theology are required. This course is not meant to be a substitute for an in-depth course in biblical exegesis or hermeneutics.

## Required Reading

The textbook will be supplied for each student. It is also available as an eBook from several outlets at a reduced price:

Anderson, Elizabeth. *Thoughtful Proclaimer: A Bottom-up Guide to Preparing Bible Messages That Transform You from the Inside Out*. Bloomington, IN: Westbow Press, 2017. ISBN 9781512797206, 1512797200

Reading the entire textbook is preferable. Completing at least the minimum daily reading assignments listed under in the class schedule is required in order to allow the student to get the most benefit from the lectures and to participate in the discussion.

## **Class Schedule and Major Topics**

### **Day One—Message Preparation Begins with Messenger Preparation**

#### **Topics Covered Today**

Three Steps to a Message  
Personal Examination  
Purposes of a Passage  
Commander's Intent  
Benefits of Sequential Preaching Plans  
Listening to the Word, Lectio Divina  
Contemplative Inductive Exegesis  
Video Preaching Samples  
Thoughtful Proclaimer Worksheets.

#### **Today's Class Covers**

*Thoughtful Proclaimer* preface, intro, glossary, chapters 1-5

#### **Assignments for Day Two**

Read at least the following pages: Glossary xix-xxiii, Chapter 1 pages 1-17, Chapter 2 pages 18-24, Chapter 3 pages 26-31, Chapter 4 pages 36-46, 55-57, Chapter 5 pages 62-64, 69-74, Chapter 6 pages 75-101, Chapter 10 pages 152-62.

(Note, in Seminar Three, Nigeria, the participants who registered ahead were given this reading assignment and the books in advance of coming to class. In Seminar Two, United States, the participants were given the textbook well in advance of arriving at class and advised to read the text.)

Note: we will cover the contents of chapters 7, 8, and 9 in class to lighten the reading for today.

Choose a passage to study and preach on.

Complete Thoughtful Proclaimer Worksheet 1.

## Day Two—"Learning to Listen": Thinking Exegetically for Accurate Bible Messages

### Topics Covered Today

#### Contextual Signposts:

- Book of the Bible
- Surrounding Passages
- Canon, Cross-References
- Primary Passage in Charge
- Think Theologically, Genre, Gospel
- the Big Story of Redemption
- Geography and Biblical Memories
- Typology and Messianic References and Covenant, Prophecy

Author's Flow of Ideas: Outlining Passage Ideas

Video and Discussion on Doing Word Studies Online

Focusing on Commander's Intent

### Today's Class Covers

A. Thoughtful Proclaimer chapters 6-10

### Assignments for Tomorrow

Complete Thoughtful Proclaimer Worksheet 2.

Outline your passage.

Write a paraphrase of the passage.

Decide on the Commanders Intent for the passage.

Read at least the following pages: chapter 11 pages 169-70, chapter 13 pages 187-92, chapter 14 pages 202-7, 211-12, 215-20.

## Day Three—"Live: A Transformative Hermeneutic"

### Topics Covered Today

Soaking in the Word  
Importance of Sabbath Rest  
Redemptive Motivation for Application  
Point for Proclamation  
Break for Walk Outside to Prayerfully Meditate on the Commander's Intent and possible Point for Proclamation  
Sermon Structures  
Simple Slides  
Compelling Truth  
Powerful Illustrations  
Introductions and Conclusions  
Quotable Catchphrases  
Anchor Images  
Final Haircut for Your Message

### Today's Class Covers

*Thoughtful Proclaimer* chapters 9, 10, 11, 13, 14

Note: Time will be available over lunch and after class to meet with the instructor if you would like help preparing for the preaching/teaching assignments. Meetings can also be done by phone.

### Assignment for Tomorrow

Complete Thoughtful Proclaimer Worksheet 3 and any unfinished worksheets or reading from the previous days.

Write out your sermons Point for Proclamation.

Consider how you might illustrate it.

Consider how you will outline your sermon.

Read chapter 12 pages 173-74, 177-80.

## Day 4—“Redemptive Proclamation”

### Topics Covered Today

Ambassadors of Reconciliation  
Always Look for Redemption in the Passage  
Three Parables with Two Redemptive Foci  
Preaching as a Three-Way Conversation  
Speak Grace not Rules  
Grateful-Hearted Motivation for Transformation  
Spirit-Empowered Application  
(In Nigeria Only) Discussion with Emmanuel on the Use of Story in Preaching to Nigerians  
Time to Work Individually and with Instructors

### Today's Class Covers

*Thoughtful Proclaimer* chapter 12

### Assignment for Tomorrow

Complete Thoughtful Proclaimer Worksheet 4.

Formulate your complete Point for Proclamation with redemptive focus.

Outline your sermon.

Plan your conclusions, your introduction, some illustration, and a redemptive application.

Write your 12-minute sermon. Edit out anything extraneous.

Rehearse your sermon and check the time carefully.

## Day 5—Preaching Practice and Evaluations

### Topics Covered Today

Preaching: personal, class, and instructor evaluation of sermons  
Celebration lunch  
Student evaluations of class

### Assignment Due Today

12-minute sermon or Bible teaching

### Learning Styles Keyed to Activities

- Aural: Instructional lectures and listening to one another
- Verbal: Classroom discussion, commendations, and critiques of each other's messages
- Physical: Practice speaking through actual teaching and preaching, practice using movement to enhance presentation
- Personal: Learn to use contemplative message-focused exegesis; work through the Thoughtful Proclaimer Worksheets, reading and reading response and questioning, Sabbath keeping, lectio divina, and meditation
- Social: Student classroom discussion, student collaboration and critique, daily lunches together
- Logical: Learn to divide up a book into pericopes, outlining a passage, structuring a sermon, and outlining it in an organized way
- Creative and Visual: Decide on Point for Proclamation, choose and use anchor images, and message catchphrases, optional use of slides, creatively illustrating a message, telling stories in the message; instructor uses visual images and story in textbook and lecture.

## **Assessments and Outcomes: Teaching/Preaching**

Students will preach or teach one time, with a 12-minute limit. There will be self-critique, classroom discussion, and collaboration with other students. The teaching and preaching portion of this class is not meant to be high stress or a final exam. It is rather meant to be an encouraging experience that is helpful to students from different backgrounds and with different abilities.

We will look for deep, heartfelt, memorable sermons based on accurate biblical interpretation with transformative redemptive applications which apply to believers and unbelievers.

The class will collaboratively discuss what was meaningful and what, in their minds, didn't work. Everyone will receive encouragement and some pointers. Additionally, the instructor will provide a personal written assessment of your sermon or teaching with commendations and recommendations for continuing improvement if needed.

Every student who completes the course is eligible for limited (up to 10) ongoing sermon coaching sessions through the Message Maestro on ThoughtfulProclaimer.com.

Students will have ample time individually assess their own learning and to inform the instructor of their evaluation of the class through the final class evaluations (see appendices E and F).

## **Policies and Assignment Format**

- Please be on time, alert, and prepared to participate in class.
- Dress code: This is a class on preaching and teaching. Your dress should be appropriate to the occasion, particularly on the day you preach.
- Late work: The instructor wants you to succeed in learning to prepare and give biblical messages. More importantly she wants you to be prepared and encouraged to look for opportunities to go out and preach. Late work will hamper your progress but can be turned in at any time after the completion of the course for evaluation. The class is ungraded.
- Missed class: Attendance is required and necessary. Email the instructor or Hebron Home as a courtesy if you must be absent with an explanation.

## Recommended Bibliography for Additional Study

### Biblical Interpretation

Wilkin, Jen. *Women of the Word: How to Study the Bible with Both Our Hearts and Our Minds*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014.

-A solid general guide to understanding the Bible. Don't let the title fool you: good Bible study is not just for women; men can do it too! Good first book on properly understanding the Bible.

Wald, Oletta. *The New Joy of Discovery in Bible Study*, revised ed. Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2002.

-A short but meaty complete guide through inductive discovery and observation.

Fee, Gordon, and Douglas Stuart. *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003.

-A must read for all Bible students. If you haven't read it yet, now's the time.

Wilson, Paul Scott. *God Sense: Reading the Bible for Preaching*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2001.

-This is one of my favorite books on Bible interpretation for preaching, which is well suited for those who have previous experience preaching or some theological education. I found it hard to read so I read it twice to understand it all, but it was worth it.

### Preaching Preparation

Richard, Ramesh. *Preparing Expository Sermons: A Seven-Step Method for Biblical Preaching*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2001.

-A complete, step-by-step guide to Bible interpretation and sermon preparation. Much like Thoughtful Proclaimer but condensed. He calls his method "Scripture Sculpture."

Sunukjian, Donald R. *Biblical Preaching: Proclaiming Truth with Clarity and Relevance*. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2007.

-If you want good basic directions for preparing simple, to-the-point, organized expository sermons, this is one of the most basic and user-friendly guides I've seen.

Chapell, Bryan. *Christ-Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon*, 2nd ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005.

-Read it now or read it later. If you plan to preach you have to read this book. It's all about keeping Christ in every sermon.

Edwards, Kent. *Deep Preaching: Creating Sermons that Go Beyond the Superficial*. Nashville, TN: B & H Academic, 2009.

-Edwards understands that preparing a sermon is a spiritual exercise. Edwards's outlook on preaching is very similar to the *Thoughtful Proclaimer*. Good reinforcement.

Robinson, Haddon W. *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2014.

-Robinson is the grandfather of "big idea" preaching. This book is especially helpful for those who have trouble finding a passage's big idea. It is also helpful for understanding sermon structures. Good all-around textbook for preachers.

## Presentations and Styles

Galli, Mark, and Craig Brian Larsen. *Preaching That Connects: Using Journalistic Techniques to Add Impact*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994.

-Full of tools for your message preparation tool belt. Keys to effective communication and great ideas for developing illustrations.

Arthurs, Jeffrey. *Preaching with Variety: How to Re-create the Dynamics of Biblical Genres*. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic, 2007.

-How to preach specific genres with creativity.

Randal, Pelton E. *Preaching with Accuracy: Finding Christ-Centered Big Ideas for Biblical Preaching*. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic, 2014.

-For those of us who have trouble deciding which of the wonderful ideas in a passage is the most important big idea. Some advice on dividing up passages for preaching as well.

Lowry, Eugene. *The Homiletical Plot: The Sermon as Narrative Art Form*, expanded ed. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2001.

-A tried-and-true method to not only knock over people's well-balanced apple cart but to help them put it back together the way God wants it done. A sure way to make your sermon culturally relevant.

## Recommended Reading for Making Messages Stick

Decker, Bert. *You've Got to Be Believed to Be Heard: The Complete Book of Speaking—In Business and in Life!* New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 2008.

-Relevant and practical book on speaking of any sort. Basic but worthwhile.

Heath, Chip, and Dan Heath. *Made to Stick: Why Some Ideas Survive and Others Die*. New York, NY: Random House, 2008.

-Fascinating and fun reading about how to make stories and ideas stick. Do you wonder why we can remember good advertisements but forget Sunday's sermon? Should be required reading for all communicators.

Reynolds, Garr. *Naked Presenter: Delivering Powerful Presentations with or without Slides*. Berkeley, CA: Pearson Education, 2011.

-The basics of making any kind of presentation.

Duarte, Nancy. *slide:ology: The Art and Science of Creating Great Presentations*. Sebastopol, CA: O'Reilly Media, 2008.

-How to use visual elements and other presentation techniques to make a lasting impact. A must read after The Naked Presenter.

## Help with Ancient Biblical Languages

Mounce, William D. *Greek for the Rest of Us: Mastering Bible Study without Mastering Biblical Languages*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003.

Fields, Lee M. *Hebrew for the Rest of Us: Using Hebrew Tools without Mastering Biblical Hebrew*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008.

## Inspiration for Proclaimers

Robinson, Haddon, and Craig Brian Larsen, eds. *The Art and Craft of Biblical Preaching: A Comprehensive Resource for Today's Communicators*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005.

-Inspirational articles for Bible proclaimers. Feeling dry? Read this.

## Passages for Proclamation

Part of this class is helping you to learn to choose appropriate and significant passages of Scripture. Choose your passage from within the following larger portions of Scripture. Note that you can speak on a longer portion or a different passage that is new to you. Some passage ideas:

If you will be preaching this weekend or in the very near future, please feel free to preach on what you have scheduled.

### EASIER

John 12

Joshua 1

Genesis 32-33

Exodus 16

1 Corinthians 9

Ephesians 6

1 John 3

Acts 5

Philippians 2

### MEDIUM

Hebrews 8

Nehemiah 5

Leviticus 25

Acts 25-26

Revelation 22

Daniel 4-5

Luke 12 or 13 or some portion

### HARDER

Isaiah 55

Judges 7-8

1 Kings 1-2

Romans 9-11 or a small section

## Sermon Assessment Rubric

The instructor will use the following tool to assess your sermon along with a subjective evaluation of her own. Your classmates will also offer comments.

- A) Participant prepared a biblical expository sermon.
- B) Sermon was based on the Commander's Intent (dual authorial intent) and focused into a single Point for Proclamation.
- C) Sermon exhibited evidence of contextual study and audience appropriateness.
- D) Sermon offered redemption in some form, either salvation or the offer of God's grace and help.
- E) The participant chose a significant length passage.

The instructor will be listening for the following items:

- Sermon or teaching fit into 12-minute schedule
- Passage well-chosen and delineated
- Point for Proclamation fits the author's intended point
- Key words noted and explained
- Interesting/holds attention
- Heartfelt/heart-moving
- Commander's Intent for passage seems clear to preacher
- One Point for Proclamation made clear to audience
- Catchphrase memorable and used
- Anchor Image helpful
- Contemporary culture considered
- Application for "Older Brother"
- Application for "Younger Brother"/skeptic/seeker
- Redemption for life offered
- Redemption for salvation offered
- Holy Spirit-empowered application
- Sermon structure followed and evident to instructor
- Strong appropriate introduction
- Truth made compelling
- Illustrations powerful
- Slides simple and appropriate if used
- Conclusion clearly fits the Point for Proclamation
- Response planned for
- No extraneous material

## APPENDIX E

### TABULATED RESULTS OF SURVEYS—SEMINAR TWO, UNITED STATES

N=10

#### **Exegetical Skills**

- 1) Do you think that inquisitive inductive theological exegesis (thinking up and asking questions regarding your passage) helped you with your message preparation?

100 % said yes.

- 2) Do you think that inductive theological exegesis is more or less valuable than your previous methods of study for preparing messages?

86% said yes.

- 3) Do you plan to use inductive theological exegesis in future message preparation?

100% said yes.

- 4) Do you plan to use questions from the TP Worksheet in future message preparation?

100% said yes.

- 5) Did the TPM method help you discover the author's intent for your passage?

100% said yes.

- 6) Had you considered the author's intent in message preparation before?

Only 56% had.

- 7) Do you find the idea of finding the Commander's Intent for a passage helpful?
- 100% said yes.
- 8) Do you think you will use the idea of finding the Commander's Intent in future message preparation?
- 100 % said yes.
- 9) Did you learn any new techniques regarding listening to the Word that you might use in the future?
- 90% said yes.
- 10) Do you feel that you learned more about the importance of the contexts of Scripture passages than you knew before?
- 80% said yes.
- 11) Do you think that you will study the contexts of Scripture in a different way now that you have learned the Contextual Signposts?
- 80% said yes.
- 12) Did you find it helpful to break your passage into idea chunks or to look at the plot line?
- 100% said yes.
- 13) Was the idea of outlining your passage as ideas or plot lines new to you?
- 40% said yes.
- 14) Do you think you will outline your passage ideas or plots in the future?
- 100% said yes.
- 15) Did you learn anything about "word studies" that was new to you?
- 70% said yes.

16) Do you think you will be able to do “word studies” now?

100% said yes.

17) Do you think you will do “word studies” to prepare for teaching?

100% said yes.

18) Do you think your exegetical skills are improved after studying the TPM method?

100% said yes.

19) Do you have an increased appreciation for the significance of choosing more significant passages of Scripture?

80% said yes.

20) Do you believe that you are more equipped to find a theme or topic to speak on a particular Bible passage since you studied the Thoughtful Proclaimer method than you were before?

*A) No Improvement    B) A Little Bit of Improvement    C) Some Improvement—1  
D) Moderate Improvement—6    E) A Great Deal of Improvement—3*

21) Did the Thoughtful Proclaimer seminar training increase your level of confidence about your understanding of the passages that you spoke on that you did in the past?

*A) No Improvement    B) A Little Bit of Improvement—1    C) Some Improvement  
D) Moderate Improvement— 6    E) A Great Deal of Improvement—3*

22) Are you more or less satisfied with the accuracy of your Bible interpretation since you studied the Thoughtful Proclaimer?

*A) No Improvement    B) A Little Bit of Improvement C) Some Improvement—1*

## Hermeneutical Skills

- 23) Do you think that the TPM helped you to apply the passage to the various kinds of people in your audience?

90% said yes.

- 24) Did you think that you are better equipped to apply your passage to your audience than you were before?

89% of respondents said yes.

- 25) Do you feel you gained skills regarding the various ways you can find the Commander's Intent or main focus for a message?

100% said yes.

- 26) Do you believe that you gained anything regarding the idea of redemptive messages that are aimed at both believers with broken lives and those who do not know Jesus?

100% said yes.

- 27) Did you understand the idea of motivating people to live out the passage based on a response of the heart to Jesus' love?

100% said yes.

- 28) Do you understand the idea of teaching people Holy Spirit-empowered application?

94% said yes; 6% said no.

- 29) Do you think you will use any of the above hermeneutical skills in future messages?

100% said yes.

If so, which ones?

*2 said all. Other responses were: 2 mentioned authorial intent, Holy Spirit-guided hermeneutics, context, digging deeper (word, grammar, structure), redemptive proclamation, Commander's Intent, audience composition, Commander's Intent for book to chapter to passage.*

30) Are you more or less confident that your message will have the intended effect of bringing transformational to the listeners since you took the Thoughtful Proclaimer seminar?

- A) No Improvement      B) A Little Bit of Improvement      C) Some Improvement—1  
D) Moderate Improvement      E) A Great Deal of Improvement—3

### **Homiletical Skills**

31) Do you think the idea of the Commander's Intent helped you to decide on an appropriate Point for Proclamation to preach or teach from a Bible passage?

100% said yes.

32) Do you think that the idea of a Point for Proclamation was helpful for message preparation?

100% said yes.

33) Did you learn any new message structures?

90% said yes.

34) Did you learn anything you didn't know regarding ways to make messages transformational because they are memorable?

80% said yes.

35) Did you learn any new skills from the TPM hat you will use in message preparation?

100% said yes.

36) Do you believe the principles and methods presented in this seminar will make you better at Bible preaching or teaching?

The choices were [ no // a little more // moderately more // much more]

50% said moderately more // 50 % said much more

### **Spiritual Edification**

- 37) Do you feel that the Thoughtful Proclaimer method was more spiritually edifying than your previous methods of message preparation?

A) No Improvement    B) A Little Bit of Improvement—1    C) Some Improvement—2  
D) Moderate Improvement—4    E) A Great Deal of Improvement—3

- 38) Do you think you will incorporate any new skills you learned (such as inductive Bible study, Lectio Divina, passage visualization, Sabbath keeping) into your message preparation?

4 said all, 7 circled "Sabbath keeping," 5 passage visualization, 5 Lectio Divina, 4 inductive Bible study

- 39) What was the most spiritually edifying part of the Thoughtful Proclaimer technique as practiced?

4 wrote in listening to the Holy Spirit, 3 said Sabbath keeping, 4 said listening to the Word, 1 said context, 2 said Lectio Divina, and 1 said applying Scripture to personally first.

- 40) What was the least spiritually edifying part of the Thoughtful Proclaimer technique as practiced?

One said inductive Bible study, 1 said visualization, 1 authorial intent, 1 said Commander's Intent, 1 said pulling a message together rather than letting the Holy Spirit lead them in the pulpit.

### **General Questions**

- 41) If you have spoken on the Bible in the past, did you feel any more or less confident that your message was based on the theme or topic of your passage than you did in the past?

A) No Improvement    B) A Little Bit of Improvement    C) Some Improvement— 1  
D) Moderate Improvement—6    E) A Great Deal of Improvement— 3

42) Do you think you will be more or less satisfied with your Bible message since you studied the Thoughtful Proclaimer Method?

A) No Improvement—1                      B) A Little Bit of Improvement                      C) Some Improvement—1  
D) Moderate Improvement—4                      E) A Great Deal of Improvement—3

43) In what ways do you anticipate that you will modify your normal preaching/teaching preparation as a result of studying the Thoughtful Proclaimer method.

Answers were: The Commander's Intent is powerful in structuring the message. Using a catchphrase is also a great too. Using lectio. Modifying for the audience context. Message will be more simple, clear, and easy to follow. One says they will dig deeper with the new tools. One says studying context. Allowing the passage to talk to me first. One person liked being able to study passages and spend time with God and working to understand others. One person said they would study the context more and also make sure they had a good conclusion to their sermon. Another one says the will start preparing earlier, let the passage transform them first, and let it percolate.

44) In what ways was your message different than the messages you have preached or taught in the past?

Answers were: My message was different in that I was thinking about the Commander's Intent throughout the preparation and delivery of the message. One said my message now have more Scripture teaching. One said having the Commander's Intent makes the message straight to the point and simple. One said their message was improved by becoming less academic in tone. One person said they got to prepare the message truthfully as they heard from God and not just the meaning of the passage. One said they would shape the message towards the Commander's Intent. This person said that after the training they preached according to the passage. Another person said their message came from their heart. The passage had become part of them.

45) What things do you agree with about the Thoughtful Proclaimer method?

Answers were: All of it. Making it personal first. Study first and be totally sold on the Commander's Intent. Let the scriptures and Holy Spirit drive the message. One said a personal encounter with the Scripture during preparation. From the personal it flows naturally to preach and teach from the heart. One said it was helpful because it was a layperson's method. One said they agreed that it was their job to speak what God meant in the Word and to apply it to ours. Another one said the liked learning about introductions and conclusions, creativity, making a point, audience, God's heart. Another said they agreed with expository preaching, transforming the proclaimer first, and context, context, context.

46) What things do you disagree with about the Thoughtful Proclaimer exegesis method?

One person found listening, author's focus and Commander's Intent to be unhelpful.

47) What things were helpful to you about the Thoughtful Proclaimer exegesis method?

Answers were: All of the content is helpful, it's a great bevy of tools and skills to apply to various teaching and preaching types. One liked knowing about more resources. One person liked the question asking method. One person said it was a refreshing way to do exegesis. Another found outlining the sermon to fit the passage was helpful. Someone found listen listen, context, context, context, and word studies helpful.

48) What things were not helpful to you about the Thoughtful Proclaimer exegesis method?

Answers were: Covering so much information in a short period of time was a difficult process. One person wanted a narrower list of resources and books recommended. One said they didn't have time to take advantage of it all.

49) What things were helpful to you about the Thoughtful Proclaimer message pre method?

Answers were: The steps and examples are very helpful. I'm very familiar with study but how to pull together a talk and deliver it was helpful. One person liked the commitment to the integrity of the Word. One person said the questions and the emphasis on hearing scripture were helpful. One said Commander's Intent. Someone said, walking through the steps throughout the week, building in personal transformation time, Sabbath keeping, percolating and not cramming to write a message.

50) What things were not helpful to you about the Thoughtful Proclaimer message prep method?

The answers were that one person thought I should narrow the list of helpful software and books, one worried that boss won't let him use the method structure, two people complained there was too much information in too short of time, and interestingly one person found listening, authorial intent, and the Commander's Intent unhelpful-which doesn't fit with the rest of the results on that person's survey so they may mean they misunderstood the question). One person felt it was too intensive.

## Regarding the Seminar Itself

- 51) Write a short paragraph about how future seminars should be modified.

Answers included: Shorter lectures. Encouragement to read or study before (which I did—I sent them all books as soon as they registered) but this one would prefer a pamphlet to study ahead of time. One said I should allow more time for processing.

- 52) Did you find the Thoughtful Proclaimer question worksheets helpful?

10 Yes / 0 No

- 53) Circle the parts of the seminar that you felt were valuable:

Everything below was circled a number of times. Additional comments are noted.

Sabbath times—

Question Sheets—

Video Clips—want more videos/someone else wanted fewer videos

Seasoned Pastor Preaching—

Day 1 Lectures—

Day 2 Lectures— isn't organized enough

Day 3 Lectures—

Slides—

Discussion—

Communal Meals—

Sharing of messages—

- 54) What was your least favorite part of the seminar?

Many people thought it was too fast-paced. I should have given them a detailed schedule like I did for Seminar One. One complained there was too much to do on the last night (wonder if they kept up on the homework to that point?). One complained there was not time to process lectures. One wanted more time to “do” and not just sit and listen to long lectures. One wanted more interaction. One didn't like sharing a message. And one didn't like being asked to critique one another.

- 55) What parts of the seminar did you not understand?

One person said they were lost in the “exegesis tools” and wanted more time to work together on a passage to apply the lesson.

56) What parts of the seminar would you have preferred to spend more time on?

Reflection, 2 people said preparation, more time in the book, application, practice throughout instead of at the end, more time to outline.

57) What parts of the seminar would you have preferred to have spent less time on?

One person wanted less time on sermon preparation methods. Another wanted shorter lectures. Another wanted more time to apply what they learned.

58) What part of the seminar would you leave out?

One wanted fewer videos. Another wanted the lectures more condensed.

59) How would you change the seminar?

One wanted more notes printed out. One wanted more time for processing. And another wanted time to practice.

60) Do you feel the seminar was too long?

No one answered.

61) Do you feel the seminar was too short?

The response was 50% thought it was too short.

62) What changes would you make in the Thoughtful Proclaimer Seminar next time?

Someone said Day 3 felt rushed. Someone wanted more practice sessions. Another wanted a more organized schedule for each day. One more wanted more time for processing and practice.

63) What comments would you like to make regarding the Thoughtful Proclaimer Seminar?

Comments: One person wants a video of a perfect TP sermon (which we had in the seasoned pastor's sermon). One person wanted another try at the sermon after the critiquing. Someone else said they loved learning about inductive Bible study.

## Simple Message Assessment Rubric for Seminar Two

This very basic rubric looked for evidence that the sermon met the seminar objectives noted in Chapter 7. A) Participant prepared a biblical expository sermon. B) Sermons was based on the Commander's Intent (dual a(A)uthorial intent) and focused into a single Point for Proclamation. C) Sermon exhibited evidence of contextual study and audience appropriateness. D) Sermon offered redemption in some form, either salvation or the offer of God's grace and help. E) The participant chose a significant length passage.

Preacher: 1 —95%

- A Was the sermon expository? Y
- B Was the sermon biblically accurate? Y
- B Was the Point for Proclamation clear? Y
- C/D Was the sermon transformational? Y
- E Was the Passage of significant enough length? N+

Preacher: 2 —100%

- A Was the sermon expository? Y
- B Was the sermon biblically accurate? Y
- B Was the Point for Proclamation clear? Y
- C/D Was the sermon transformational? Y
- E Was the Passage of significant enough length? Y

Preacher: 3 —100%

- A Was the sermon expository? Y
- B Was the sermon biblically accurate? Y
- B Was the Point for Proclamation clear? Y
- C/D Was the sermon transformational? Y
- E Was the Passage of significant enough length? Y

Preacher: 4 —100%

- A Was the sermon expository? Y
- B Was the sermon biblically accurate? Y
- B Was the Point for Proclamation clear? Y
- C/D Was the sermon transformational? Y+
- E Was the Passage of significant enough length? Y

Preacher: 5 —90%

- A Was the sermon expository? Y
- B Was the sermon biblically accurate? Y
- B Was the Point for Proclamation clear? Y-
- C/D Was the sermon transformational? Y
- E Was the Passage of significant enough length? Y

Preacher: 6 —90%

- A Was the sermon expository? Y
- B Was the sermon biblically accurate? Y
- B Was the Point for Proclamation clear? Y-
- C/D Was the sermon transformational? Y
- E Was the Passage of significant enough length? Y

Preacher: 7 —90%

- A Was the sermon expository? Y
- B Was the sermon biblically accurate? Y
- B Was the Point for Proclamation clear? Y
- C/D Was the sermon transformational? Y-
- E Was the Passage of significant enough length? Y

Preacher: —8 85 %

- A Was the sermon expository? Y
- B Was the sermon biblically accurate? Y
- B Was the Point for Proclamation clear? Y
- C/D Was the sermon transformational? N+
- E Was the Passage of significant enough length? Y

Preacher: 9 100%

- A Was the sermon expository? Y
- B Was the sermon biblically accurate? Y
- B Was the Point for Proclamation clear? Y
- C/D Was the sermon transformational? Y-
- E Was the Passage of significant enough length? Y

Preacher: 10 90%

- A Was the sermon expository? Y
- B Was the sermon biblically accurate? Y
- B Was the Point for Proclamation clear? Y
- C/D Was the sermon transformational? Y-
- E Was the Passage of significant enough length? Y

## APPENDIX F

### TABULATED RESULTS OF SURVEYS—SEMINAR THREE, NIGERIA

N=16

#### **Exegetical Skills**

64) Do you think that inquisitive inductive theological exegesis (thinking up and asking questions regarding your passage) helped you with your message preparation?

94% said yes.

65) Do you think that inductive theological exegesis is more or less valuable than your previous methods of study for preparing messages?

81% said yes.

66) Do you plan to use inductive theological exegesis in future message preparation?

67) 100 % said yes

68) Do you plan to use questions from the TP Worksheet in future message preparation?

75% said yes.

69) Did the TPM method help you discover the author's intent for your passage?

94% said yes.

70) Had you considered the author's intent in message preparation before?

Only 50% had.

71) Do you find the idea of finding the Commander's Intent for a passage helpful?

100% said yes.

72) Do you think you will use the idea of finding the Commander's Intent in future message preparation?

100% said yes.

73) Did you learn any new techniques regarding listening to the Word that you might use in the future?

100 % said yes.

74) Do you feel that you learned more about the importance of the contexts of Scripture passages than you knew before?

100 % said yes.

75) Do you think that you will study the contexts of Scripture in a different way now that you have learned the Contextual Signposts?

100% said yes.

76) Did you find it helpful to break your passage into idea chunks or to look at the plot line?

100% said yes.

77) Was the idea of outlining your passage as ideas or plot lines new to you?

75% said yes.

78) Do you think you will outline your passage ideas or plots in the future?

75% said yes.

79) Did you learn anything about "word studies" that was new to you?

81% said yes.

80) Do you think you will be able to do “word studies” now?

75% said yes.

81) Do you think you will do “word studies” to prepare for teaching?

81% said yes.

82) Do you think your exegetical skills are improved after studying the TPM method?

100% said yes.

83) Do you have an increased appreciation for the significance of choosing more significant passages of Scripture?

75% said yes

84) Do you believe that you are more equipped to find a theme or topic to speak on a particular Bible passage since you studied the Thoughtful Proclaimer method than you were before?

A) No Improvement      B) A Little Bit of Improvement—1      C) Some Improvement—1  
D) Moderate Improvement—12      E) A Great Deal of Improvement      No answer—2

85) Did the Thoughtful Proclaimer seminar training increase your level of confidence about your understanding of the passages that you spoke on that you did in the past?

A) No Improvement      B) A Little Bit of Improvement—1      C) Some Improvement  
D) Moderate Improvement—2      E) A Great Deal of Improvement—10      No answer—1

86) Are you more or less satisfied with the accuracy of your Bible interpretation since you studied the Thoughtful Proclaimer?

A) No Improvement      B) A Little Bit of Improvement      C) Some Improvement—2  
D) Moderate Improvement—3      E) A Great Deal of Improvement—8      No answer—

## Hermeneutical Skills

- 87) Do you think that the TPM helped you to apply the passage to the various kinds of people in your audience?

100% said yes.

- 88) Did you think that you are better equipped to apply your passage to your audience than you were before?

100% said yes.

- 89) Do you feel you gained skills regarding the various ways you can find the Commander's Intent or main focus for a message?

100% said yes.

- 90) Do you believe that you gained anything regarding the idea of redemptive messages that are aimed at both believers with broken lives and those who do not know Jesus?

100% said yes.

- 91) Did you understand the idea of motivating people to live out the passage based on a response of the heart to Jesus' love?

88% said yes. 12% did not respond.

- 92) Do you understand the idea of teaching people Holy Spirit-empowered application?

94% said yes. 6% said no.

- 93) Do you think you will use any of the above hermeneutical skills in future messages?

94% said yes. 6% did not respond.

- 94) If so, which ones?

2 said all. Other responses were redemptive proclamation, Holy Spirit-empowered application, inductive questions, Commander's Intent, Bible application needed for message, context of audience. (Note: 9 did not answer this fill-in-the-blank-style question.)

95) Are you more or less confident that your message will have the intended effect of bringing transformational to the listeners since you took the Thoughtful Proclaimer seminar?

A) No Improvement      B) A Little Bit of Improvement      C) Some Improvement—3  
D) Moderate Improvement—1      E) A Great Deal of Improvement— 1      No answer—1

### **Homiletical Skills**

96) Do you think the idea of the Commander's Intent helped you to decide on an appropriate Point for Proclamation to preach or teach from a Bible passage?

100% said yes.

97) Do you think that the idea of a Point for Proclamation was helpful for message preparation?

88% said yes. 12 % did not answer.

98) Did you learn any new message structures?

100% said yes.

99) Did you learn anything you didn't know regarding ways to make messages transformational because they are memorable?

100% said yes.

100) Did you learn any new skills from the TPM that you will use in message preparation?

100% said yes.

101) Do you believe the principles and methods presented in this seminar will make you better at Bible preaching or teaching?

The choices were [ no // a little more // moderately more // much more ]

19% said moderately more

75% said much more

1 person (6% of the sample) didn't answer

### **Spiritual Edification**

102) Do you feel that the Thoughtful Proclaimer method was more spiritually edifying than your previous methods of message preparation?

- A) No Improvement      B) A Little Bit of Improvement—1      C) Some Improvement—1  
D) Moderate Improvement—4      E) A Great Deal of Improvement—9      No answer—1

103) Do you think you will incorporate any new skills you learned (such as inductive Bible study, lectio divina, passage visualization, Sabbath keeping) into your message preparation?

4 said yes. 1 circled "Sabbath keeping," 11 did not answer. (I assume this means it is a badly worded question or people felt it was redundant.)

104) What was the most spiritually edifying part of the Thoughtful Proclaimer technique as practiced?

2 said all, 10 did not answer. 4 wrote in topics such as redemptive aspect, thoughtful proclaimers changed by the Word, listening, preaching the Word of God.

105) What was the least spiritually edifying part of the Thoughtful Proclaimer technique as practiced?

Answers written in were, culture, biography of the passage (unsure what they meant), practical preparation, worship, prayer.

### **General Questions**

106) If you have spoken on the Bible in the past, did you feel any more or less confident that your message was based on the theme or topic of your passage than you did in the past?

- A) No Improvement      B) A Little Bit of Improvement      C) Some Improvement—4  
D) Moderate Improvement—3      E) A Great Deal of Improvement—8

107) Do you think you will be more or less satisfied with your Bible message since you studied the Thoughtful Proclaimer Method?

- A) No Improvement      B) A Little Bit of Improvement      C) Some Improvement—2  
D) Moderate Improvement—2      E) A Great Deal of Improvement—11

108) In what ways was your message different than messages you have preached or taught in the past?

Answers were: focus on Commander's Intent (2 wrote this), word study, redemptive purpose (2 wrote this), opening and closings of messages, background of passage, application of Commander's Intent (11 wrote this in), overall improvement, Point for Proclamation, use outline.

109) What things do you agree with in the Thoughtful Proclaimer method?

Answers were: study surrounding context, inductive Bible study (2 wrote this), message preparation methods, Commander's Intent (3 wrote this), motivating the audience to apply the message, focus on one point.

110) What things do you disagree with about the Thoughtful Proclaimer method?

Only 1 person answered and they said they disagreed with Commander's Intent. It must be noted that this answer seems questionable since the same person was positive about the Commander's Intent in another question.

111) What things were helpful to you about the Thoughtful Proclaimer exegesis method?

The answers were word study, handouts, learning to ask the right question or practice inquisitive exegesis (2), Commander's Intent, easy to understand, encouraging, edifying method, allowing the Holy Spirit to control and use the preacher.

112) What things were not helpful to you about the Thoughtful Proclaimer exegesis method?

3 people said "nothing" was not helpful. Note that 6 of the 16 people did not answer any questions on the next three pages. This indicates to me I asked too many questions.

113) What things were helpful to you about the Thoughtful Proclaimer message prep method?

One person answered that the idea of focusing on context of surrounding passages was helpful. One person answered that living the message out and the three steps of the Thoughtful Proclaimer was helpful. One person found "how to prepare a message" helpful. And one person noted that they found everything helpful.

114) What things were not helpful to you about the Thoughtful Proclaimer message prep method?

One person said that "nothing" was not helpful. No one else in the Nigerian cohort answered this question.

## Regarding the Seminar Itself

115) What should be changed about future seminars?

One seemed to comment that the idea of understanding the culture might be a problem. One person wished that we had a way to make it so we had the same people every day instead of having people coming and going on different days.

116) Did you find the Thoughtful Proclaimer question worksheets helpful?

10 answered yes, no one answered no. One person added, “very much.” It is interesting to note that some people found the handouts I made helpful and another person said I should just walk people through the book and save the money on paper.

117) Circle the parts of the seminar that you felt were valuable:

The number of people who circled each one is noted.

Sabbath times—6  
Question sheets—6  
Day 1 Lectures—7  
Day 2 Lectures—8  
Day 3 Lectures—8  
Slides—4  
Discussion—6  
Communal meals—4  
Sharing of messages—7

118) What was your least favorite part of the seminar?

One person answered “genre.” And one person answered that there was not enough time for discussion. Though this was true, I found it impossible to have classroom discussion as no one would talk. Perhaps we should have broken up into small groups.

119) What parts of the seminar did you not understand?

One person answered genre, one said they didn’t understand the Commander’s Intent as fully as they wanted to. One person was confused about the cultural context section.

120) What parts of the seminar would you have preferred to spend more time on?

One person would have liked to spend more time on everything. One person would have liked to spend more time on Commander’s Intent. One person would have liked to spend more time on redemptive proclamation. Two people wished there was more discussion.

121) What parts of the seminar would you have preferred to have spent less time on?

Three people answered this question and both said, “nothing.”

122) What part of the seminar would you leave out?

Four people answered and all said, “nothing.”

123) How would you change the seminar?

One person mentioned it would be better to follow the Thoughtful Proclaimer textbook than to use all handouts.

124) Do you feel the seminar was too long?

Five people answered no.

125) Do you feel the seminar was too short?

Five people answered yes and four people answered no.

126) What changes would you make in the Thoughtful Proclaimer Seminar next time?

Though some said nothing, others recommended fewer handouts.

127) What comments would you like to make regarding the Thoughtful Proclaimer Seminar?

Comments below:

- “Thoughtful Proclaimer seminar made me discover who I am in terms of message preparation.”
- “I think that more time should be given to the seminar so there can be more discussions during the seminar in order to bring out the best of the course.”
- “Very good and impactful.”
- “The Thoughtful Proclaimer seminar is sure a great blessing to me and it increased my confidence in presenting my message now. Thank you for coming our way, may the good Lord bless and your family.”
- “The seminar is perfectly okay, but as aforesaid, there [was supposed] to be more awareness or to announce it very well, or to be taking it to locations if possible. Many pastors may like to come but transportation may be a hindrance factor.”
- “The Thoughtful Proclaimer seminar is very impactful seminar that has really changed my message mentality. And also make me to understand that before I preach I have work to do. I pray that God will help Liz the more for the greater work of God. Amen.”

## Education

The amount of education and experience question could not be correlated to any difference in results according to the surveys of Seminar Three (though this was not the case in Seminar Two), primarily because the surveys were so positive.

As to the amount of Education: Eight of the 16 respondents report theological/Bible school training. This is slightly higher than the percentage of people with theological training in the United States Seminar Two:

- One had a Diploma in Theology from Christ Apostolic Church Theological Seminary. A “Diploma” in Nigeria usually correlates to at least two years of post-secondary school education. He was an experienced pastor having pastored churches for many years.
- One had a Bachelor of Science degree from Liberty Seminary, and a Diploma from a Pentecostal Seminary, a Certificate from ECWA Seminary, and a Certificate from CAC Seminary.
- One had a Diploma in Biblical Studies from a Bible School.
- One had a National Diploma in Computer Science and had attended Dunamis Bible School.
- One was in Secondary School but had attended Dunamis School of Ministry.
- Three answered “yes” to formal Bible school or theological training with no school specified.
- One had a National Diploma with no theological training noted.
- Seven did not answer the question regarding education.
- One participant seemed to have trouble with the difficulty of the seminar due to lack of proficiency in the English language.
- Some were currently enrolled in Hebron Home’s Bible training.

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